

The Viking and the Arrow

by Button-Neck

Category: Brave, 2012, How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Angst, Romance

Language: English

Characters: Hiccup, Merida

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2013-03-21 02:57:32

Updated: 2014-07-12 04:04:07

Packaged: 2016-04-26 14:44:01

Rating: T

Chapters: 10

Words: 26,754

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: When Merida was a child it was agreed that when she was of age she would marry the son of the Viking chief in order to bind an alliance between the two.

1. Prologue

A/N: Mericcup is actually my very first crossover ship. I just really like the idea of Hiccup and Merida together even if it's a brotp, this is not a brotp fic btw. With that said this is my first crossover fic and more than likely will need some tweaks here and there, and will be a_learn as you go_experience.

I did try to incorporate their accents, so just a fair warning when it comes to reading it

* * *

><p>"What's the Future? It's a blank sheet of paper, and we draw lines on it, but sometimes our hand is held, and the lines we draw aren't the lines we wanted." â€• John Marsden

An arrow flew, narrowly missing its target. The young girl sighed had yet to make a single bull's-eye, however, in the few short months since she had been given her own bow and arrows she had improved greatly, her father couldn't have been more proud.

She ran to gather the small group of arrows to try again, her fire red hair bounced with her small run.

As she returned to her firing spot she heard a cluster of voices that were foreign to her. They sounded nothing like her mother or father's, or even the Lords of the other three clans, who had which arrived yesterday.

She peered around the corner; there were easily ten men at least.

Right away she could tell that they weren't from around here. They wore many furs and earthy colored clothing; their long beards were braided in various different ways so that no two man's beard was the same. They also all wore helmets with horns, some were straight, and others crooked or curved.

And then there was him.

The only child amongst them all, he looked to be around her age. He wore no helmet and was scrawny and small; he looked out of place.

Before she could see where they were going her name was called.

"Merida," she turned around to see Maudie "there ye are. The wee Lords are looking for ye." She noticed the arrows that Merida still gripped in her hands. "Now ye know how your mother feels about ye playing with weapons"

"But I wasn't playing!" she said defensively "I was practicing."

"Any matter, I'm sure ye've had enough practice for one day, come along, we mustn't keep them waiting."

Merida ran past Maudie and grabbed her bow. "Can I at least take Naris?" she asked holding up the bow. "Naris?" she questioned. "Da says that all th' best weapons have names, so I named my bow after th' hero in one of da's stories." Maudie had a look of confusion on her face "Oh," was all she could manage to say about the child's logic "I don't think your mother would approve. You should leave it here."

Merida allowed her head to hang slightly and her shoulders drop. She walked over to where the weapons were kept and made it look as if she put it in its place, but really she had just found a clever way to hide it.

~::~~

At the river the four of them played, except for Finlay Dingwall, who stared mindlessly into the running water "he had always been a little strange and short for words. Merida showed off her new bow to Grigor Macintosh and Airth MacGuffin.

The three of them were only a few years older than her, and they were really the only friends Merida ever had. She enjoyed it when they visited since there were no other children in the castle. However, they weren't always entirely nice, and by the end of every visit someone would be in trouble.

"I bet I can shoot better than ye can" Grigor said to Merida.

"I bet ye can't."

"Gimme an arrow 'n' I'll prove it."

She took an arrow from its holder and handed it to him.

"What are ye shooting at? Ye need a target."

He sighed and looked for an acceptable target. "Aright then I'll hit tha' tree" he said pointing.

He aimed the bow and pulled back the arrow, half-concentrating on where he wanted it to go and then released it. It flew past the trees and out of sight. Merida laughed at him, even Airth chuckled quietly. He became frustrated with his own actions and threw her bow to the ground and crossed his arms in front of him. "It's yer stupid bow's fault. Cheap piece of--"

"No it's nae!" she picked it up off the ground "Ye juist did it wrong." She drew another arrow and positioned herself, hoping that all the times she had practiced wouldn't be in vain. She focused on the target and took in a deep breath, when she released the arrow it hit the tree, not the exact target, but it was much closer than Grigor's arrow.

"That's how ye dae it" she said smiling.

"Yer bow is stupid like ye." He pushed her to the ground. Merida stood up, bow in hand, and wacked him across the face with it. For someone her size, the force of the hit was hard and Grigor stumbled.

"Nae sae stupid now is it?"

She dropped her bow and dodged him as he tried to grab her and ran into the woods.

"Where are ye goin'?" Airth asked "Th' sun is settin', we should head back." He was always one to worry and take precaution.

"I have tae find th' arrow that Grigor lost. Da won't gimme anymore unless he knows I can handle at least three."

"But if we're late th' queen will have our heads."

"Why don't ye help me find it then?"

They spread out, looking under bunches of fallen leaves, in the bushes, Finlay even looked under a few rocks.

It was Merida who found it sticking out of a bush. "I found it!" she yelled informing the others.

"Great, now let's get back." Grigor looked around "Where are we anyway?" they had never been this far into the woods alone; they were supposed to stay by the river. Suddenly Finlay pointed, all three heads turned to see what it was.

A path, it was narrow and they would all have to walk single file, at the bottom it led out into the village part of DunBroch, if they were fast enough they could make it back before the sun went all the way down.

"It doesn't look safe."

"C'moan Airth, live a little. If Merida can dae it ye can." Merida

had made no hesitation about taking the path. She had to get home, and didn't want her mother to have another thing to be mad at her about. They soon found out that some of the dirt was loose and if they weren't careful they could slip and fall over the edge onto the rough hill that wasn't intended for tumbling or rolling down.

They were almost to the bottom and the dirt became sturdier, not all of it though. Merida had become careless with her footing. She felt the dirt give way beneath her feet; all she could think to do was clutch the arrow in her hands tight to herself. None of them could catch her in time.

Half way down there were bushes and trees that blocked the view of the bottom and she disappeared into them. The queen was definitely going to kill them now.

When she reached the bottom she was, surprisingly, unharmed. She even still had the arrow in between her hands. Smiling she picked herself up and moved her hair from her face, she then saw two large boots.

Her smile fell as her eyes rose. It was one of the men from before. They had been a good distance away before, but now she could see his face, and how much bigger he was than her. He was about the same height as her dad, but her dad's face was kind and loving, his face was mean and unforgiving. Truthfully with looks alone he frightened her, like any other small child would have been.

Merida felt like a bug that was about to be squashed.

The only time her fear allowed her to look away from him was when she noticed movement behind him. He had peeped out from behind the man's leg to look at her. He gave a small smile and wave. She didn't return the gesture.

Then she was suddenly in her mother's arms. She didn't know how she got there and she didn't care, all she knew was that she would protect her from the frightening men that she had, literally, tumbled upon.

Her mother said something to them and they replied and turned to leave. Merida didn't pay attention to the words; all that mattered was that they were leaving.

After they were half way back they came across Maudie who stood with the young Lords. She bowed slightly as they approached.

"Take Merida back and make sure she gets cleaned up and ready for supper," she was transferred from her mother to the nursemaid "I need to have a _small_ talk with the young Lords."

The queen then proceeded to grab one ear of each and dragged them back. How she managed to do that with only two hands no one knew. Merida's mother could do a lot of things that normal people couldn't. She could walk into a noisy or crowded room and they would always fall silent and make way for her, all without her saying a word. She could control Merida's dad, the fearless Bear King, and even the three Lords of the other clans when they started one of their fights. She was a lady and people gave her respect because of it.

As they went back to the castle Merida looked over Maudie's shoulder and watched the remainder of the men leave.

"Who are they?"

"Who's who?"

"Those scary men"

"Those 'scary men' are Vikings, Merida."

"Vikings?"

Maudie nodded

"Vikings are th' bad guys though, da said so. Why were they here?"

"Ye sure have a lot of questions." she quickly changed the subject
"C'moan then let's get ye cleaned up, you're filthy."

Indeed she was filthy; she had dirt smudged on her face and dress, and some leaves and small twigs sticking out of her hair.

She didn't bring up the Vikings later; she had already forgotten them for the most part, they were like the bad part of a dream. What bliss it must have been to be a child, where most things were_out of sight, out of mind._

Little did Merida know that the Vikings had been there for a reason, one she would find out only when she was older.

* * *

><p>REVIEW!<p>

2. Chapter 1

"She wanted none of those days to end, and it was always with disappointment that she watched the darkness stride forward."- Markus Zusak

~11 years later~

The ground thundered as the creature dashed by. Its rider let out a shout of joy as she let go of the reins and threw her arms out, her hair flowed behind her like flames in the wind. In moments like this everything else was forgotten, no responsibilities, no lessons; she could be herself, here she was free.

But sadly her freedom never lasted as long as she would have liked. The clouds were darkening and she would have to head home soon, but first she would gather a few arrows from the targets hanging from the trees to put in her quiver. She wasn't a three arrow girl anymore.

The weather conditions hadn't exactly been ideal for riding or for her archery practice, but that had never stopped her before.

As they entered the stables and Merida got off her horse thunder rolled, and drops of rain began to fall.

"Looks like there's gonna be a storm after all, huh Angus?"

She gave him some routine tending before going inside, and just as she did the rain poured down.

Shaking off some of the water and chills she made her way to the dining hall.

For once her dad wasn't telling the story of how the ferocious Mor'du took his leg. Instead he was toward the end oftelling of the tale of her bow's namesake, Naris. The young red headed triples listened eagerly to the new violent story.

She hoped that her lateness would go unnoticed; placing her bow on the back of the chair she sat quietly at the table and filled her plate with the food from the plates in the center.

"Nice of you to finally join us, Merida." her mother said without even looking up from the documents she was looking over, when she did look up she noticed Merida's hair was damp from the rain. "I hope you weren't outside in that storm, you'll catch your death."

"It's only a little rain," just then a clash of thunder was heard, as if to contradict her. "â€|was only a little rain."

She sighed "Beside the point, now that you're here your father and I have something important to tell you, Fergus."

He was giving a visual demonstration of the story and had the leg of meat in his hand mid-air like a sword.

He lowered his arm "Yes dear?"

"Don't you have something you'd like to tell Merida?"

She turned to her father.

"Wellâ€|umâ€|th' three Lords arrived today."

"And why are the three Lords here?" Elinor asked, trying to get him to give more information on the subject.

He had dreaded this coming day for eleven years now, and he had to be the one to tell her? She wouldn't like the idea, not one bit. But it had to be done for the future good of the Kingdom, and the other three Clans.

"Well ye see," he began "there comes a time in everyone's life whereâ€|" he tried again with a different phrase "sometimes ye have tae make sacrificesâ€|" looked to his wife for guidance.

She interfered when he continued to stumble over his words and got farther from what was trying to be said.

"What your father is trying to say is, there comes a point in everyone's life where you have to make personal sacrifices for the greater good."

Merida looked confused "What are ye talking about?"

"The Lords are here to support us and the kingdom when we leave for Berk tomorrow."

Berk, she had heard that name before, but couldn't put a location with it.

As if she had read her mind her mother filled her in.

"Berk is to the north, if you actually paid attention in your studies you would know that."

Something was strange about all this. Highlanders didn't just go to the north on a whim. It was unheard of, especially since one type in particular of their enemies lived there.

"But th' north is Viking territory." she said "Are ye going tae make a declaration of war?" It was the only logical explanation given the current information.

"Our reason for going is the exact opposite of war; we are going so we can finalize an alliance."

An alliance between Highlanders and Vikings, the idea was as crazy as it sounded. Had they both forgotten that they invaded the lands and would have taken over, had it not been for the three clans coming together? Of course there had been no wars between the two in her lifetime or even her father's, but the history was still there, and the idea was absurd.

"What makes ye think they'll keep their word? They're nae exactly th' most trustworthy people oot there. It cuide be a trap to ambush ye!"

"That's where you come in."

"Me? What have I got tae dae with this?"

"You're an important part of the alliance terms Merida; you and the chief's son that is." Merida suddenly got a sinking feeling in the pit of her stomach, she knew where this was going, but it hadn't completely registered yet.

The queen took her silence as a chance to further explain. "The terms to binding the alliance were that when you both were of age, you would marry the chief's son."

Shock cover her face "What, you hae tae be joking, right?"

"I wish we were lass." Her father said sympathetically.

"Merida this treaty has been pending for eleven years, we can't just back out now."

"Eleven years?" Her chair fell back as she abruptly stood up "Ye waited eleven years tae tell me this?! All that time ye knew that ye were going tae just sell me awa' tae some Viking in th' north?! I can't believe you would dae something like that! They are our enemies

'n' ye want me to marry one just so you can have a stupid treaty?! I won't go thro' wit' this, ye can't make me!"

Up until now her mother had been calm, but with the girl's outburst, it took effort to remain her composure. She turned to her sons whose eyes were still on Merida. "Boys, I think it's time for you to go to bed." They looked at one another and made some sort of silent agreement to leave. But of course that didn't mean they were going to bed when such excitement was going on. They would use one of their secret passageways to watch the rest.

After they had left the queen turned back to Merida who still glared at her.

"Merida," she said trying to keep her voice calm, but it was becoming more of a challenge. "try to understand how this can benefit us and the kingdom."

"It'll benefit you, nae me! Ye care more about th' kingdom than yer own daughter! "

"Merida, this alliance will-"

"I don't care about yer stupid alliance!" With that she stormed off "And I'm nae marrying a Viking savage!" she said before continuing to her room.

Her mother called her name as if it was an order for her to come back, she didn't listen.

~::~

When Merida entered her room she slammed the door shut. Finding her sword on the floor she clenched the handle in her hand and began swinging at the air, until it met one of her tall bed posts. She continued to cut into the post, pretending it was a number of things.

She didn't hear them sneak in but she saw their identical red hair. They stood near the fireplace, next to the hole in the wall, which they had entered in from. One held a small brown sack, and handed it to her.

Inside there was food from had forgotten that she didn't even have a chance to eat before she stormed off. Inside there were two legs of meat, a bread roll and three sweets. Of course they had gotten more sweets than anything else.

"Thanks" She smiled at them "Ye heard all o' that did ye?" she asked judging from the fact that they had brought her food. They all nodded.

Her smile fell. If she didn't do something she would have to leave them. The three little devils who always played pranks, some she had even helped with. Merida was one of the few that could actually tell them apart, even her own mother got them mixed up sometimes.

Merida shook her head.

How could her parents do this to her? Just uproot her from her life

like this. Didn't she have a say in any of this? She was going to be force to live with a bunch of savages for the sake of peace.

She had always assumed that she would just end up marrying one of the young Lords; it would certainly beat marring a Viking any day.

This is not the fate she wanted.

But it didn't matter what she wanted; by the end of tomorrow they would be leaving for Berk, and it felt like her life would fall apart.

* * *

><p>REVIEW!<p>

3. Chapter 2

A/N: Do you guys know how many times I cut chunks of this chapter out and typed new ones in just to fit the back story (more to come on that later). One thing I will tell you is, you will defiantly notice something different when i comes to Hiccup and the village...

And also not every chapter will have a quote thing (I couldn't find one to fit this chapter, but when I do I put it here for future readers.)

Now enough of my rambling, here's the chapter.

* * *

><p>He stood on the docks gazing out past the water's horizon. Meanwhile a blonde haired girl around his age made her way to him. He didn't acknowledge her as she stood beside him. Following his gaze to the water, she knew what he was thinking; it was what the entire village was talking about.<p>

"Big day tomorrow." She said suddenly. He remained silent, and she continued. "This whole thing is crazy; you being forced to marry someone that you've never even met, and worse she's a Highlander." Sometimes she really didn't know when to stop talking. "I wouldn't want to be you. You don't even get a say in this. Whether you like her or not you're stuck with her, for the rest of your to top it off, the entire tribe is counting on you not to screw up, because if you do you could possibly start the first war we've had in generations."

"Thank you for pointing all of that out, Astrid." She wasn't helping the matter any. It was nothing new to him; these were things that he had been thinking about since he had learned of the arrangement. "Is there something you wanted or did you come just to tell me what I already knew?"

"Oh, right. Your father said he wanted to see you, he's in the Great Hall."

"Did he say what about?"

"Nope, but I'll bet you a Deadly Nadder that it's about

tomorrow."

He made his way into the middle of the village where the Great Hall stood. Hiccup opened one of the massive tall doors and went inside. Cloth tapestries of dragon killing images hung along both walls. Hiccup despised them, they were an insult to him. He wasn't a dragon killer, and he never would be.

"Astrid said that you wanted to see me?" he walked over to where his father was, the chief of the tribe, Stoick the Vast.

"Tomorrow is a big day, Hiccup."

"I know, if they ever make it into a holiday they should call it _Big Day_, day." He said trying to lighten the mood.

"This is a serious matter, Highlanders will be here soon."

Hiccup was confused. "But I thought they were coming tomorrow."

"They're ahead of schedule, they'll be arriving tonight. While I finish making preparations, I want you to make that beast of yours disappear. I don't care what you do with _it_. I don't want to see _any_ signs of it being in the village."

"But-"

"And another thing, I might as well tell you now; we will have a dragon tournament as entertainment for our guests."

Hiccup's stomach began to sink. "What kind of dragon tournament, exactly?"

"A dragon killing one of course."

"Dad, you can't-"

"We are Vikings, Hiccup, even though _you_ might not act like one, we _kill_ dragons, not _ride_ them."

Hiccup opened his mouth to speak but didn't get a chance to.

"The only reason I'm telling you this now, is because if something mysteriously happens to the devil, I'll know who to blame. And I'm warning you Hiccup, if that dragon somehow escapes, it will be _yours_ that's in the ring."

"But you can't just-"

"That's final, Hiccup! You will not interfere with tomorrow's plans. For one day you will not be," he gestured to him "this. You will be a Viking! Understand?"

"Dad, I-"

"Understand?"

Hiccup sighed reluctantly; his eyes fell to the floor. "Yea, I understand."

"Good. Now I have to help the others finish making preparations."

With that he turned and left, leaving Hiccup alone.

The last thing he wanted was to watch a dragon die, but what other choice did he have? Toothless was his best friend, the only real one he had ever had really. Hiccup just couldn't sacrifice him like that. He hated that there was nothinghe could do. In times like these he felt he lived up to the name _Hiccup the Useless_.

~::~~

"No!" Merida yelled as she woke. She breathed slowly, trying to catch her lost breath from her dream. She looked around to see if she had woken anyone, but they were all still sound asleep.

She knew there was no way she would be able to go back to sleep so she got out of bed, found her cloak and made her way to the railing on the deck.

Three weeks they had been at sea, on their way to Berk, and for three weeks Merida either had nightmares, or she didn't dream at all. If she ever had the _slightest_ inkling that she was going to go along with the alliance, her dreams had destroyed it.

In her dreams it was as if all the characteristics of all of the Vikings in her dad's stories came together into one person. And that person was the chief's son. She had no idea what to expect, and all she had to rely on were those stories, terrible, violent stories.

Though she would never admit it to anyone, for the first time in a long time, she was afraid. What if the stories were true? Was she doomed to a fate where she would become some Viking's whore? What if this entire alliance really was a ploy to easily ambush the Highlanders? She had so many questions that only time could answer, and she wasn't even sure she wanted to know the answers.

"What are ye daein' up?" a voice behind her asked. She turned to see her father.

"I couldn't sleep." He joined her at the railing.

"Right, tomorrow's th' day."

"Don't remind me." She turned away from him and looked back at him slightly. "â€|Why did ye wait _eleven_ years tae tell me?"

He tried to think of what to say. There had been no reason why they couldn't have told her sooner. What was done was done, and she wanted to know why.

"Becauseâ€|because I wanted tae forget about it. I wanted tae forget about what we wid be daein', even though it's for th' good o' th' kingdom."

"But why _marriage_? Why me?"

"That's juist th' way it is lass, I'm sorry."

Merida knew her father meant it too; you could hear it in his voice and see it in his eyes. She was his little girl; of course he didn't want to give her away to a complete stranger. But it was for the greater good; at least that's what he told himself at night so he could sleep.

"Land ho!" the lookout cried suddenly.

They exchanged a glance and he paused before saying "I'll go wake yer mother."

Merida looked to the distance; two dots of light led the way to the entryway into Berk. But to her it was like the gates of Hell.

~::~~

Quicker than she would have liked, they made it to the docks.

When she got off the boat she noticed two men waiting for them. One was slightly shorter than the other and from what she could see in the dark, appeared a fake left wooden leg and a right hook that took the place of his hand. The taller one was more intimidating, even though he had no artificial limbs; Merida noted how his cold eyes gleamed in the moonlight.

"Chief Stoick." Fergus addressed the taller one.

"Bear King." he answered back, though they were here for an alliance there was still obvious tension between the two. He glanced at Merida "This your girl?"

" 's yer boy?"

"You'll meet him soon enough."

"I'll show ye were ye'r staying" the shorter man said, he must have sensed the uneasiness between the two and thought to intervene.

They started walking up the hill that lead into the main part of the village, Merida didn't get very far before she felt a tug on the skirt of her dress, she looked down and saw her brothers. Together they all held something in their arms. From the cloth that surrounded it she knew immediately what it was.

"Raysnare!" a smile spread across her face, completely forgetting where she was.

Her mother had hidden all of her weapons. She wouldn't need them tomorrow anyway, it wasn't fitting for a lady to be seen with them, so they had been locked up.

But luckily her brothers could find a way around almost anything. Of course she would have preferred her bow, Naris, but Raysnare was an acceptable substitute.

~::~~

Hiccup trudged through the woods. He had hidden Toothless in the cove and spent the rest of the day with him. Night had fallen and he should have been home by now, he needed to get some rest. With the amount of stress that was put on him about tomorrow, he would need it. Having bags under your eyes was not attractive; he may not have had any idea about the girl he would marry, but he at least wanted to look presentable. But things never went exactly the way he wanted them too.

He saw the shine of the metal and heard angry mumbling. When she turned around her arm was straight and the sword extended its length, and it pointed right at Hiccup. Their eyes both widened in surprise. She hadn't noticed him until now, her eyes quickly narrowed. She got closer with her sword, making a threat.

"Who are ye?"

"I- uh" he sputtered.

"Were ye watchn' me?"

"N-no, no, I wasn't watching you, I was just taking a walk." he said finally, putting his hands up show he meant no harm. Her fiery red hair glowed in the moonlight, and her clothing was definitely not Viking's "You're not from around here are you? Wait, you're a Highlander?"

"Aye, 'n' ye'r a Viking." She spat the word.

"If you're a Highlander," He began to draw the clues together "does that mean that you're the princess?"

"Unfortunately."

"So that means you're the one that's going to marry m- the chief's son." Hiccup could sense her hostility towards the situation and thought best to keep his identity hidden for now.

She turned her sword away from him and drove it into a tree, adding to the number of cuts already craved into it. She came out here to get away from the reality of tomorrow, not to be reminded of it.

"I am not marrying some Viking savage!" she drove the sword yet again into the tree. "Ugh, I just want to chop his head off!" she wedged it out of the cut "Both of them!"

Hiccup discreetly distanced himself a little more from her, he was glad she didn't know who he was or he would have been killed on the spot, and worse.

"Merida!" her mother called suddenly. The sound of her name caused another cut in the tree. "It's not fair." She whispered.

She looked back at him only once and started to walk back to where they were staying. Hiccup watched as she left. He now knew what his wife-to-be looked like at the least, even if it was in the dark. He also knew that once they met officially, it was possible that she would try to kill him.

* * *

><p>REVIEW!<p>

4. Chapter 3

A/N: I'm so sorry for the delay, but theses last two weeks have been very busy for me. And to make up for it this chapter is almost 2,000 words!

Anyway, before you read this chapter you should know that Berk's story is a little different than in the movie (I plan to write a one shot on it, which will be posted on my tumblr)

This chapter was a bit of a challenge, because I'm not all that good at wring action scenes but I tried and that's what counts.

* * *

><p>The sun had risen, it was a new day; it was the day.

Somehow, and not without a lot of argument, the queen had managed to get Merida into her special clothes for the day.

The style was a mixture between Viking clothing and Scottish. The skirt was two layered, with the first layer being a dark blue going down to her ankles, and the second, which was embroidered with green and blue designs, going just above her knee. Her shirt was loose, long sleeved and pale grey with thick lined blue cuffs. And over it was a blue top; medium sized golden pendants connected the straps to the rest of it. Around her waist was a thick brownsash.

Elinor put the finishing touch on Merida's outfit, a crown; it somehow managed to fit onto the wild mass of red curly hair. It had Celtic knots and twists going around her head, in the center of Merida's forehead there was a jewel that brought the piece together.

She stepped back to admire her handiwork and gasped, while Merida was fidgeted in the new clothing. It wasn't exactly uncomfortable; in fact it was quite the opposite. It would just take a while for her to get used to the different style of clothing.

"You look beautiful."

"I feel like a twit. I don't understand why I have tae dress up for this Viking. They don't care aboot any o' this."

"Merida, it is tradition."

She scoffed "Tradition, bunch a load o'--"

"Merida! Ye will not disrespect our ancestors or their ways."

A knock came at the door. "It's time. Merida--"

"I know, I know, 'member tae be a lady." She looked away. Elinor wanted to say something that would cheer her up, make her see that the situation wasn't all that bad. "Merida," she said softly. Merida

looked up hopeful; maybe her mother suddenly had a change of heart. "remember to smile." That's what she said, instead of saying something helpful or to make her feel better, her mother had said that.

Merida gave her best shot at giving a big fake smile. "We should go." he mother said "Don't want to be late."

Merida made her way to the door, but before she could even get through it she felt a tug from behind. "What is this?"

"Most people would call it a sword."

She had managed to somehow hide it, for the most part. But leave it to her mother to notice the slightest thing out of place.

"Merida, you know what I said about weapons."

"But what if they start tae attack us? Ye want me tae juist stand there defenseless?"

"We are not here for them to attack us. And you're not always going to have a weapon with you, what will you do if something happened then?"

"I would always hae a weapon, if someone did nae keep hidin' 'em from me."

Her mother sighed and placed the weapon on the bed "Come on we're going to be late." She urged Merida out the door leaving the weapon behind.

~::~

They arrived at the ring just minutes before they were to be announced. The young Lords were arguing over who would be first to enter, but stopped when they saw Merida.

"What? What are ye looking at?" she asked when she saw that the three of them were looking at her differently than they normally did. They stammered in response.

Eventually Grigor managed to muster up a sentence. "Nothing ye juist look weird."

"Gee, thanks"

Merida could hear the Viking chief making some sort of statement before he would introduce them. She tried peeking around the corner to see the crowd, but she was pulled back before she could get a good look. Her mother again was obsessing over trying to make last minute perfections, not that much more could be changed about how she looked.

"Of Clan Dingwall, presenting Lord Arie Dingwall and his son, Finlay Dingwall!"

There was only a long enough pause for them to appear from the stone stairway and make their way down to the platform before the next was called.

"Of Clan Macintosh, presenting Lord Rogier Macintosh and his son, Grigor Macintosh!"

They proudly walked in front of the crowd with their bare chests showing, and their heads held high. Out of all the clans they were the ones to show off the most.

"Of Clan MacGuffin, presenting Lord Hamel MacGuffin and his son, Airth MacGuffin!"

They went and stood by the others in the line that they had made.

"Of Clan DunBroch, presenting Lord of the Highlands, King Fergus, and his sons, Hamish, Hubert and Harris!"

They went to join beside the others; Merida was left with her mother. This was it, she would stand in front of countless Vikings and one of them would be her supposed betrothed.

"Lastly, of Clan DunBroch, presenting Lady of the Highlands, Queen Elinor, and her daughter, Merida!"

The sound of her name was like the last words an executioner would say before carrying out the sentence.

They began walking down the wide carved out stone stairway. Merida watched her mother in front of her, everything slowed, but before she knew it she stood in front of the Viking tribe. The number of the Highlander party was child's play compared to the number of people who stood before her now.

"And I present my son," Chief Stoick said "Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third"

Merida turned to see him when he was called forth. He was the chief's son; she had expected that he would at least look like he was to lead the tribe one day. She expected him to look like the others, but he was far from it.

He was scrawny; like a twig that could easily have been snapped. The only thing that made him remotely like the others was his style of clothing and the helmet he wore on his head, which appeared to be a bit too big.

He looked familiar.

Then the realization hit her. He was the one in the forest last night. Had she known that he was the one, she would have seized the opportunity then and there. Seeing who he was now, Merida knew that she could take him in a fight, but unfortunately Raynare had been taken from her, the gods had sided with him on this one.

"Now that the introductions and announcements have been made, who's ready for the dragon tournament?" the others roared excitedly in reply. They gathered around the ring as the chief made his way through the crowd to his chair, beside it was a seat for his son and then a bench beside that for the queen and Merida. The triplets had been taken away by Maudie; this was not an event for children their

age.

By her mother's doing, Merida was forced to sit beside Hiccup.

"Uh, hi?" he said, trying to make conversation.

"Ye'r lucky" she replied

"What?"

"If I had mah sword I'd run ye through right noo."

Her eyes met his. If only looks could kill.

"I know that these aren't exactly the most pleasant circumstancesâ€|"

She let out a huff of air and tuned out the rest and instead decided to focus on the ring below. Lining the wall was different shaped large doors that could only be opened from outside.

It must have been where the dragons where kept. She had only ever heard stories about them, never in her life had she seen one before.

One of the Vikings entered the ring; he waved at the crowd as he walked to where the weapons were kept. He picked up a sword, then a shield and faced the doors. He gave a small nod to state that he was ready, an order was given and the log that kept the large door shut was removed.

There was a pause before the beast exploded from its confinement, Merida jumped slightly in her seat. Hiccup noticed but said nothing.

Green smoke hid the beast from sight, but Merida could have sworn she saw two heads. The fighter backed away, his guard was up, prepared for anything.

The crowd was silent, waiting to see which would make the first move.

Its head snaked out from the settling smoke and opened its mouth to reveal white sparks. Another head appeared, its mouth foamed with the green smoke.

The green smoke wasn't smoke; it was lighting gas for the dragon's flames. Two heads on one dragon, one controlled the gas and the other gave the spark.

With a yelled he charged at it. Merida wondered how one man could defeat a creature as large as this. The dragon was much bigger than Mor'du, and even her father couldn't beat him alone.

He ran toward the middle of the two heads, he was going straight for the heart. Gas was shot at him and the spark would be short to follow, instead of striking where he first intended he turned quickly to face the gas head.

Quickly he jumped onto it where the head and neck met, dropping his

shield in the process. The beast shook its head violently, trying to shake him off, but he wouldn't let go. When it stopped, the fighter took the chance to steady his sword that he had somehow managed to hold on to. Taking it in both hands he held it above his head. With a yell he shoved the blade down into the center of the dragon's head.

The whole scene was sickening. The sound of its skull cracking open from the blow and the shriek it made from the pain. The spark head cried in pain, the other head spewed the green gas everywhere as it tried to dislodge the sword, but it was dead either way.

Something snapped in the spark head. Suddenly it turned on itself, it started biting and gnawing at the gas head, until eventually it fell apart from the body and onto the ground. There it wriggled in the blood that was gushing out, the last bit of life still fighting.

There was no chance of dragon fire now.

The dragon went over to the severed head. It made a faint whimpering sound that Merida believed she could only hear, because if the others had heard it they would have surely stopped the fight.

She heard the sound of someone taking deep breaths. Looking to Hiccup she saw that it was him. His eye were averted from the ring and focused hard on the ground, and his hands clenched his seat.

He really was different from the rest of them. He looked as though he were in pain; as if he shared the dragon's as his own.

She briefly wanted to ask him if he was okay, but decided against it. The crowd cheered louder and Merida turned her attention back to the ring.

The fighter had managed to finish the beast off. He ran around the ring as they cheered him on. He walked over to the dragon and took the dagger from his belt and carved out the heart. He held it in the air; the dark red blood dripped from it and ran down his arm.

Merida cringed at the sight. This indeed was not an event for children.

The chief got up and said something, but neither Hiccup nor Merida heard thing they knew they were on their way to the Great Hall for a feast. But how could anyone eat after such an event?

* * *

><p>REVIEW!<p>

5. Chapter 4

A/N: I feel like i could have done much better on this chapter, but whenever I go to fix it, I don't know what I could change to make it better. I'm not too sure about the characterization for the young lords either or anybody's for that matter...

There are links on my profile explaining why Hiccup is still treated

the way he was pre-Red Death, if you're curious.

* * *

><p>The Great Hall certainly showed that the Vikings had a strong sense of community.<p>

There was one long table, which the majority of them sat at, and more tables and benches were placed close next to it for those that had no room at the table. The Highlanders sat at the head with the chief. Merida sat beside her Mother and in front of Hiccup.

The feast was nothing like she imagined, the food had been edible, and the one cup of wine she had been allowed to drink was tasteful.

They talked amongst themselves; every now and then laughter would be heard in various places. Drunken men sung off-key somewhere farther down the table. It was just a normal tribe feast; the presence of the Highlanders and the occasion was almost forgotten.

From stories she had heard from her father and travelers, she expected to see men fighting to the death for the sake of dinner entertainment.

She had expected to see raw meat platters served, fresh from the killing, and was thankful to see none; she had seen enough blood for one day.

The stories had been wrong; however they had never been about this particular tribe. But weren't all Vikings the same?

Stoick stood up from his chair and held up a hand. Eventually everyone ceased talking and looked to him. He announced that it was time for the council and the Highlanders to meet in order to finalize the agreement. The Clan Lords stood and so did the council members. They made their way into the Council Hall, a small room compared to the dining area. Right before the door was shut the others began talking again, as if they had just been on pause.

Silence and uneasiness filled the room. The man from last night, the one who show them where they would stay, brought a piece of paper forth and placed it on the round table in the center of the room.

"Now let's get down to business," Stoick said "you all know that eleven years ago we traveled to the Highlands in order to form an alliance. And here we are, eleven years later, our children are grown and of age. Both parties signed the agreement that day, the terms have not changed. Now the only signatures needed are my son's and your daughter's." He looked both to Merida and Fergus.

Stoick called on Hiccup, and motioned for him to come forward, he handed him a black and grey writing feather and pointed where he should sign.

Hiccup hesitated, by signing this he would be marrying this girl who hated him, and quite possibly wanted to kill him, and by the looks of it very easily could if she wanted to. If he didn't sign it would likely result to a hot tempered argument that could possibly lead to

a war, among other things, and he didn't want that. If he did this then he would be doing something that would actually help the village for once.

Reluctantly he signed his name on the line. Merida was then called forward.

Suddenly it was hard to breathe and it felt like the weight of the world rested on her shoulders. She got to the table and picked up the feather. The line for her to sign on was under Hiccup's. This was it. The decision that she made right this second would change her life forever.

Making up her mind she dropped the feather back onto the table and spun around to face the Viking council and her people.

"I'm nae signing it." she said. A gasp was heard somewhere in the room.

"Merida we talked about this." her mother said.

"I'm nae signing it and I'm nae marrying a Viking." She said as she crossed her arms and then glared at Hiccup.

"Merida you have to sign it."

"Do you want a war on your head girl?" Stoick asked

"There won't be a war if ye don't start one." Merida spat back.

"I am the chief of this tribe and a Highlander will not talk to me that way." Stoick's temper began to rise.

"Don't talk tae mah daughter like that." Fergus jumped into the growing argument, and so did the other Highlanders. The once silent room was now filled with arguing Vikings and Highlanders.

Hiccup watched what was unfolding before him. He was glad that for once that something wasn't his fault, but he didn't want to witness the beginnings of a war.

Suddenly Merida's voice rang above the rest. Her attention was on her mother. "Stoap trying tae mak' me like ye! I'm never going tae be like ye! I'm mah own person! I'm tired o' ye telling me whit tae say, whit tae dae, how tae dress!" At this point the majority focused on Merida, but she didn't notice. She didn't even really hear what she was saying; she was talking out of anger. "Ye know whit, mother, maybe I shuid sign it! Because it seems that th' only guid thing that wull come frae al' this is I'll be getting awa' frae ye!"

The queen was taken back by her words. "You think this is easy? Giving away my only daughter-"

"Yes! I was never th' daughter ye wanted! I'm dane pretending I was. Ye don't care; ye never care aboot whit I want! It's always whit ye want, or whit ye think is best for th' kingdom! Ye don't care aboot me, but that's fine, because I hate ye!"

The queen looked as though someone had twisted a dagger into her heart. "Merida-" Her mother reached out to her, but Merida backed

away shaking her head.

She didn't want to hear anything her mother had to say. She ran to the nearest exit and out of the Great Hall. The Vikings didn't notice as she passed by.

At times like this she would go to Angus, although he was just a horse he helped her calm down. But Angus wasn't here, he was back in DunBroch. They had said that it wouldn't be safe for him on an island that had dragon attacks.

And it was any safer for her? She didn't understand their logic.

After she had gotten down all of the steps leading up to the Great Hall she was trying to decide where to go next. She noticed how quiet it was outside; no one was in sight because they were all still in the Great Hall.

"Merida!" she turned to see Grigor, Finlay and Airth running down the steps after her.

"What happened?" Grigor asked when they caught up.

"Nothing, Iâ€¦I did nae sign it."

"What?"

"I'm nae signing th' treaty."

"Sae ye juist walked out o' thare?"

"It was more o' a run than a walk, but yes."

"Nice." His support of her actions made her feel a little bit better.

"No it's nae," Airth said "we need thaim tae be oor allies."

She crossed her arms "A thought ye werr on mah side."

"I am, but I think ye shuid really think about whit ye'r daein', before ye dae something ye'll regret."

"Ye'r kidding me right? Ye think that I'll regret _nae_ signing that stupid treaty?"

"No, but I think ye'll regret when something happens and it's yer fault. All I'm saying is think o' th' others that wull be affected by this, nae juist yersel'."

"Ye sound like mah mother."

"Think about it, if ye don't sign it, a lot o' people cuid get hurt."

Merida was taken back "Ye want me tae sign it? I can't believe ye. Ye'r siding wi' them 'n' her!"

"That's nae whit I meant, I juist-"

"Don't!" she snapped "J-juist lea me alone." With that she took off out of the village with no direction in mind.

Grigor moved to go after her but Finlay stopped him and simply shook his head. Having known him almost all his life he understood what he was saying, even if he spoke no words.

Grigor then turned to Airth and hit him in the back of the head. "Way tae go."

"What? What did I say?"

He hadn't meant to upset her, he just told her what he thought she needed to hear. None of them liked this situation one bit. They didn't want to give up their friend to some Viking; and from what they had seen he was the poorest excuse for one.

If they had more time they could have come up with some elaborate plan that might have fixed all of this, but time is something that they did not have.

~::~~

Meanwhile back in the Council Hall, shortly after Merida ran off, things had died down. Now they had a new situation presented before them, however the solution wasn't difficult to come up with.

"It's settled then." Stoick said "Hiccup, go find her so she can say goodbye."

"I don't think I'm really the one who-" he looked to his father who was glaring at him. Stoick wasn't in the mood to be questioned or disobeyed. "Right, I'll just- I'll just go do that."

~::~~

Merida was somewhere in the woods, where exactly was of no significance; all that mattered was that she was alone. Alone with the quietness of the trees, and the songs of birds, they wouldn't tell her she was making a mistake.

She wiped her eyes. It felt like no one understood her side, not even her friends. Did everyone really expect her to just sign the treaty and give up her life? There was so much that she could do and wouldn't be able to if she was married to some Viking.

Twigs snapped behind her, she turned around to see none other than Hiccup.

She scowled at him. "What dae ye want?"

"Nothing, I-"

"If it's nothing then lea me alone." she began to walk away but he followed.

"Wait, I just came to tell you-"

"I don't care what ye have tae say tae me."

"I just thought you'd want to see your parents off." He said quickly.

Merida's heart stopped "What did ye say?"

"Your parents are leaving, I-I just thought that you'd want to say goodbye."

"But I didnae sign th' agreement! They can't lea me here!"

"You can see for yourself." He gestured in the direction that would lead her back.

She picked up her skirts and ran to the edge of the woods. She saw Highlanders loading up the longboats with supplies.

Spotting her father in the crowd, Merida desperately made her way to him.

"Da, what's goin' on?"

"We have tae lea before th' ice sets in."

"Without me? I'm goin' back wi' ye, right?"

"I'm afraid nae lass."

"But I didnae sign th' treaty. Ye have tae tak' me home."

Fergus laid his hands on her shoulders "Berk is yer home noo." Not giving her a chance to reply he pushed her away gently and walked onto the boat, she followed him.

"Berk will never be mah home! I don't understand, I didnae sign th' treaty, sae why dae I have tae stay?"

"Thay wantae make sure that we don't go back on oor word."

"But treaties are aboot trust! Shouldn't they trust us nae ae go back on oor word?"

"That's nae th' way it works lass."

"Whatever I did wrong I'm sorry. Mah lessons can be doubled; I'll even cut back on mah riding time! I juist want tae go home. Please Da."

"This isn't a punishment, Merida. It's a€¦it's an _honor_, tae serve th' kingdom like this." Fergus had to force himself to say the word, it was still bitter on his tongue.

Someone called for his assistance; they exchanged a glance before he walked away.

"There ye are," she turned to see the young Lords approach her "we were beginning tae think that we wouldn't git tae say goodbye." Grigor said.

She met them on the dock. "Ye knew that I would have tae stay here

and ye did nae tell me?"

"We juist found oot tae."

"We wanted tae come find ye, but they wouldn't let us." Airth looked at Merida apologetically and fiddled with his hands. "I'm sorry about what I said before; I did nae mean tae upset ye."

"It's alright, I know ye did nae mean tae." She looked at all three of them "I'mâ€|I'm goin' tae miss ye guys." She grouped them together in a big hug.

It came time for them to board their ships so they said their goodbyes. Airth was first, giving her yet another hug and apologizing again for before. Finlay was second, giving Merida one of his rare moments where he actually spoke. Grigor was last.

"Goodbye, Mer."

She punched him in the arm "Ye know I told ye nae tae call me that."

"I know. That's exactly why I did, for old time's sake." He looked past Merida to Hiccup who was watching beside his father further up the dock. "And if that little _runt_ tries tae dae anything, try nae tae kill him. We did nae want this tae all be for nothing and start a war."

"I'll dae mah best nae tae." With a final hug he left.

After he had helped the person who called him away, Fergus came back and joined Elinor by her side on the dock.

"Are ye sure I cannae juist sneak on tae th' boat. By th' time they notice we could be long gone." Merida made one last attempt to persuade him to let her go home, but he shook his head.

"I wish it were that easy."

"Will ye even come visit?" she knew that the question was ridiculous, he was the king; he couldn't just go visit her if he took a notion to. Things didn't work that way.

"Of coorse I will, whenever I can." But he was her father and he would cross stormy seas, and travel to the end of the earth for her.

Merida threw her arms around his neck and he responded with a big bear hug.

"I'm goin' tae miss ye sae much." She whispered.

"Nae as much as I'm goin' tae miss ye lass." He let her go and kissed the top of her head.

Next thing she knew the triplets had jumped onto her, clinging to her so they couldn't leave. Merida convinced them to let her go and they stood in front of her while she crouched down to their level.

"Ye'll see me again before ye know it." They gave her a look that

questioned her statement. "I promise." They tackled her into a hug before Maudie called them. "Be good, can ye dae that for me?" they looked to one another before nodding.

Merida stood and dusted herself off before turning to the queen.

"Mother." Elinor subconsciously prepared for another verbal attack, but none came. Surprisingly Merida had nothing to say to her. The anger she had towards her before had now depleted into almost nothing. She was far too tired to work up the energy to fuel new anger either. "Have a safe trip."

With that she turned on her heel and left. It would be easier for her and everyone if she watched them leave from a distance. She went up the wooden walkway that was attached to the cliff side.

By the time she got to her spot the longboats took sail, headed home, without her. On the decks she saw figures moving, they were waving. She meekly raised a hand and waved back.

When they got far enough where she could no longer see them her hand fell to her side. She stayed on the walkway until the longboats had disappeared over the horizon and the sun had begun to set.

They'll come back. She told herself. _Once they realize what a mistake this treaty is, they'll come back for me_.

~::~

After Merida had said her farewells, Stoick went to say his short goodbye and to wish the Highlanders a safe journey. Hiccup was told that he was to watch Merida and make sure she didn't get into any trouble. How was he supposed to keep her from getting in trouble? If she wanted to do something then she would do it; it's not exactly like she would listen to him.

He followed her up the wooden ramp, but kept a respectable distance. He had watched her wave goodbye, and even when it was certain that they could no longer see her she remained.

Now the sun was shedding its last rays of light for the day and the longboats were long gone. By now Hiccup had sat down, glancing at her every now and then, she still stood there watching the horizon, waiting for them to come back.

"Is there something ye wanted? Or are ye juist going tae sit there and stare at me?" she asked suddenly.

Had she been aware he was there all this time? He quickly stood and brushed himself off before she looked at him.

"I just thought I'd take you back when-whenever you were ready." It was already starting to get cold with the absence of light, it would be best to go back now.

"Where am I staying?"

"With me and my dad."

Merida glanced back at the water one last time before following Hiccup into the village.

Chief Stoick's house was farthest from the sea and closest to the Great Hall; by the time they had got there night had fallen.

He led her inside and up the steps to a room. When Merida walked in she noticed that it was considerably smaller than the one she had back in DunBroch.

"This will be your room for now."

"For noo?" she questioned.

Hiccup's eyes dropped to the floor and he played with his hands "You knowâ€|until we'reâ€|..married."

"Oh." Merida said realizing what he meant "I think ye mean 'til thay realize this treaty is a bad idea 'n' come back tae git me; because I'm nae _ever_ going tae marry a Viking." With that she shut the door in his face.

"â€|or that."

Hiccup went to his room, which was next to Merida's, and retired for the night. It had been one very long day.

* * *

><p>REVIEW!<p>

6. Chapter 5

A/N: I'm so sorry for the long wait on this one. I had originally planed to update after school let out but then I got writer's block. Then I was in the hospital for a week and hadn't even touched my computer until practically a month later and I'm still in recovery.

Anyway I tried to fix the accents the best I could, because on the last chapter, it was a bit heavy and a little hard to read. Thank you reviewer for pointing that out. Constructive criticism!

* * *

><p>It had been a week since the Highlanders left. Merida had watched the horizon every day since; waiting for them to realize the mistake they had made and come back to get her.<p>

But every day was the same result, a clear horizon.

When she wasn't watching for them she spent most of her time shooting arrows into a few of the many trees in the woods. The forest areas on Berk were similar to the ones back home; however, no matter how similar they were, it wasn't the same.

Back home her days consisted of waking up early for her studies, and then she might have time to go for a ride, there was some excitement there, she could have an adventure. But on Berk everyday was the

same.

She would wait until after Stoick and Hiccup left before coming out of her room. When she came down the steps there was always breakfast waiting for her, courtesy of Hiccup. It was a gesture she appreciated, but would never thank him for.

After that she went out the back door, wanting to avoid the village as much as she could. Normally she didn't come back until it was almost or after nightfall.

Although she had brought some of her own dresses from home, she was also provided with some that had more of a Viking fashion. As much as she didn't want to admit it, Viking clothing was more comfortable than her own; it was looser and less form-fitting.

Lately she had been wearing a long green skirt with a darker green sash that hung in the middle. Her undershirt was a loose long sleeved light grey shirt with thick green cuffs. Over it was a green top that matched her skirt with medium sized pendants gathered the straps together.

Berk was farther north than DunBroch, which meant it was colder. Merida didn't understand how all of these people weren't cold with the way they dressed. They weren't dressed for winter, but for the warmer months. She had even seen some children with sleeveless shirts, and not a single shiver escaped them.

Vikings truly were crazy.

~::~~

Hiccup's life for the most part hadn't changed; he still had his daily responsibilities. His apprenticeship at the Smithy with Gobber, after he finished there he had to make sure that Toothless was fed.

He hardly saw Merida, and at times almost forgot she was there.

Since there had not been a dragon attack in days Hiccup wasn't needed for much at the Smithy, so he was given the rest of the day off. Normally he would have gone flying, to stay out of everyone's way, but since Merida's arrival he couldn't do that. Having no idea where she went during the day, he didn't know where not to fly, so she wouldn't mistake it for an attack. And having an accidental _dragon attack_ wasn't worth the risk.

Instead they just stayed in the cove. Toothless would watch Hiccup draw up and modify plans for his strange inventions, and at times he would try to get Hiccup to go flying. There was a reason dragons had wings after all.

"I know bud; I want to go flying too. But it's not like I can just go tell her 'Hey Merida, guess what, I have a pet dragon, so if you see him flying overhead don't call a dragon attack or anything.' Things aren't that simple." Toothless huffed, believing otherwise. "Maybe it's that simple for you dragons, but not for humans." Hiccup could have told her about Toothless the first day, but he had decided to let her get adjusted to her new life before bringing something else new

to her attention.

~::~~

Merida sat on one of the docks looking out into the water. It was a place that she had to go through the village to get to, but no one ever bothered her. But today her silence was interrupted.

"There she is," Someone said from behind. She turned to see a group of people around her age approaching her. "I was beginning to think that she left when the others did."

The one talking was in front of the group; behind him was a girl with an axe over her shoulder, behind her was another boy who was a bit chubby, and at the back of the group were a pair of twins. At the sight of the axe Merida stood, expecting trouble.

"It's about time I met my cousin's _wife_. I'm Snotlout."

"I'm nobody's wife."

"But, that's why you're here isn't it? To marry that little runt. Or were you just holding out until you found a _real_ Viking?" he looked at her with a confident smirk.

"I don't want a _real_ Viking_, I want tae go home."

Someone snickered. "She talks funny." one of the twins said. The other one joined in laughing.

"Ruffnut, Tuffnut, don't you have something that you should be doing right now?" Snotlout said

They looked at each other and shrugged. "No."

Snotlout rolled his eyes and turned his attention back to Merida.

"As I was saying- wait what do you mean you don't want a real Viking? I'm as real as it gets!" He looked at the girl behind him "Tell her, Astrid," she rolled her eyes and said nothing so he turned his attention to the other boy "Fishlegs?" his tone was threatening.

"Y-yea, you're the realest Viking there is, except for, you know, the chief."

"Yea, well _I'm_ going to be chief someday."

"But I thought that Hiccup was th' heir."

Snotlout chuckled "He isâ€¦ for now. But when the chief finally realizes that he's not fit to lead us, I'll become the heir." He turned from his illusion to Merida. "What do ya say princess? Think you can handle a real Viking?"

Merida cringed and then sputtered out a small laugh. "I think I'll pass." Deciding that now was the best time to leave she made her way back into the village.

"Yea, alright, see you later!" Snotlout called after her. "She'll come around. I mean, how can she resist this?" he then proceeded to flex his muscles.

~::~~

Merida walked through the big doors of the chief's house and up to her guest room. She removed the bow that was hung across her shoulder and placed it with her quiver on the floor.

The last few rays of sun light shone through her window; it was a bit early for her to be back, but there was something in the air that made Merida uneasy about staying out too long after dark.

"What are you doing here?" someone said behind her, people really needed to stop doing that.

She turned to see Hiccup standing at her doorway. "What dae ye mean why am I here? Hae ye missed recent events?"

"No, what I meant was, usually you're not back until it's dark"

"Th' sun's going down; it's basically th' same thing."

"Right, ya, of course."

A silence fell between them

Merida cleared her throat. "Sae is that all orâ€|?"

"Nope, uh, nothing else." He moved to walk away but stopped. "Actually there is something else." Now was a good time as any, and the sooner he told her the better. A week was enough time to get adjusted to a new life right?

She crossed her arms "What is it?"

"You know that Berk is subject to dragon attacks."

"Yes, even though there hasn't been a single attack since I got here." The only dragon she'd seen was the one she wanted to forget about.

"Right, well, there's something that you should knowâ€|about me."

She looked him up and down.

Before he could continue the front door was heard being closed.

"Um, I'll be right back." he told her before he made his way down stairs.

She peeked out from her doorway and heard Hiccup and Stoick talking. Mainly about food she figured because a few different options rose to the top of the stairs where she could hear them clearly.

Their shadows moved and she closed the door. She expected the knock that came shortly after.

"Merida?" his voice was muffled by the door. "We're going to eat soon, if you want to join us."

"I'm nae really hungry right now, maybe later. Ye guys go ahead 'n' eat without me."

Truthfully she was hungry, but it wasn't anything that she couldn't wait out. However unlikely it was, she wanted in no way to become comfortable around these people.

He said nothing else and Merida heard him walk away.

She went to hang up her cloak, only it wasn't there. Maybe it had fallen onto the floor, she looked under her bed. It wasn't there either.

It was then that she remembered earlier when she was shooting arrows she had taken it off.

"Shit."

Immediately she headed for the door, but quickly stopped. If she wanted to avoid them then she would have to wait.

In the meantime she would have to figure out how she would find her way in the dark.

~::~~

When the moon reached its highest point in the sky Merida crept downstairs. She noticed that the fire was still going, and there was also a pot hanging over it. She got closer and saw that there was enough food for a bowl or two. She had no doubt that this was Hiccup's doings.

He tried so hard to make her feel welcome, it didn't make any sense. He should hate her like she hated him. Frankly all of this irritated Merida, if he thought that his little gestures were going to get him anywhere he had another thing coming.

Quietly she snuck out of the house. During the day normally she would wander aimlessly into the woods, not keeping track of where she had been or where she was going. This method was great for wasting time but horrible for finding lost items. As far as lighting went, luckily tonight was a clear full moon sky. It wasn't much, but it was better than nothing. She couldn't exactly take a torch with her at the risk of being spotted, and having false accusations made against her.

By the time she found the cloak it was the dark early hours of morning, and Merida was exhausted, fortunately finding her way out a lot easier than going in to search. When she came out of the woods she was far from the chief's house, which sat at the top of the hill.

She was half-way there when she stopped. She stood there for a few moments and listened. Slowly she took her bow off and drew an arrow. Turning her head she saw a small flock of resting sheep, suddenly one was snatched into the air. Her eyes went wide.

"Dragons." She whispered.

The alarm sounded. It wasn't long before nearly everyone was awake and fighting. Merida went unnoticed as she fought amongst them.

A green Gronckle flew in her direction. "Hello beastie." She pulled back an arrow.

"Watch out!" losing her concentration the arrow flew and only grazed it. It was the boy from yesterday, the _real Viking._

"Move aside honey, a _delicate_ princess like you should get inside." But while he was talking the Gronckle flew straight at them. Merida glanced back and forth to the weapon he held and the dragon. Quickly she grabbed the weapon and pushed him away, causing him to fall. The unexpected weight caused her to drop it to the ground; she picked it up and spun, hitting the dragon just in time.

Merida turned to the boy and pointed the spiked club at him. "Stay out of mah way Foot gout!" she threw the weapon at his feet and made her way to the armory, she would need a better weapon to fight with.

"My name's Snotlout." He said but she couldn't hear him

~::~

She would have used her own sword but the armory was closer and now was not a time to be picky. "I need a sword." She said when she got to the window.

"Sure thing, just hold on a-â€|Merida?"

"Hiccup? What are ye doing here?"

"I work here, actually I'm an apprentice."

"Oh, well since ye work here, hand me a sword."

"It's not safe out here, you should get inside."

That struck a nerve. "Ye think that just because I'm a girl I can't fight? Or that I'm juist some delicate little princess that needs protecting? Ye'v got some nerve; I don't see ye oot there fighting. You're in here hiding like a coward. Now give me a weapon." Her voice was even, but the anger in it didn't go undetected.

At that moment a sword flew through the air, having missed its target, and logged itself into the side of the armory. However by the time she removed it from the woodwork the dragons were leaving. The sun had started to rise. She watched as the silhouettes of the flying beasts disappeared.

A sudden pain shot through Merida's arm, it was as though a fire had entered her veins. Dropping the sword she lifted her sleeve, which she now noticed was spotted with blood. It was either a scratch or a bite, she couldn't tell through the blood and the vein-like markings following the fire in her arm.

"You were bit?" Hiccup asked, although it was more of a statement than a question.

"I don't even remember it happenin'."

"It looks like it's poisonous, come on-" Hiccup had moved out from behind the stall and started to move her but she stopped him.

"Where are ye taking me?"

"Old Wrinkly, he'll know what to do. He can help."

~::~

Old Wrinkly lived in an old hut that, thankfully, wasn't that far from the armory. Merida waited in a room while Hiccup went to search for the old man. The fire had now made its way up to her elbow.

"He's coming, he was just- â€|you probably don't even care, do you?"

She opened her mouth to speak, but no words came.

"I'll just get out of your hair then. My dad will want to know where I am, and what happened." He walked past her.

"Hiccup, -"

"I don't think you're weak. If you were weak you wouldn't have made it."

A door closed, taking Merida's attention away from Hiccup. When she looked back he was walking away.

"So Hiccup tells me that you were bit. Mind if I take a look?"

Old Wrinkly was, of course, an old man who had a long white beard that nearly touched the floor. He carried a walking stick that had a hook like curve.

She rolled up her sleeve. "It burns."

"Well that's expected, especially if you were bit by a venomous dragon."

He took her arm in his hands and examined it after he cleaned the blood off.

"Ah! I have just the thing for this." He waked over to the other side of the room where numerous bottles were shelved. He muttered to himself as he looked through the selection, finally he picked a bottle filled with a green substance.

"What is that?" Merida asked.

"You don't want to know, but it will make you better." He got some bandages out of a drawer. "You're just lucky that the cure's not a potato, nasty that one."

"A potato?"

"It's a _long_ story." Old Wrinkly said as he placed the supplies on the table. He pulled out a chair for Merida and sat in the one across from it. She took a seat and held out her arm.

"_Old Wrinkly_, ye people hae the strangest names."

"I'm old and I'm wrinkly, it fits" he said.

As he placed the green goo on her arm Merida looked around and noticed that the place was nearly deserted. "Where's everyone else? Surely I can't be th' only one with injuries."

"Most people usually get a few scratches and bruises here and there, but they tend to take care of those themselves. I must say that you're the first case I've seen like this in a long time."

"Why's that? Don't other people get bit or scratched by poisonous dragons?"

"Nope. We've got these," he held up his arm to show his forearm cuff. "It's made from dragon's skin. They can't burn, bite or scratch us as easily with these."

He finished tying up Merida's bandage and gathered up his stuff to put back where it belonged. "Keep that on it for a couple of days and you'll be right as rain."

She thanked him and got up to leave.

"Oh, before I forget, tell my grandson to stop by later. I want to talk to him"

Merida looked confused. "Um, who's yer grandson?"

"I thought that you would know. It's Hiccup"

"Yer Hiccup's grandfather?"

"Sure am. On his mother's side"

"Oh, okay, I'll let him know. I'll juist let myself out now."

"And Merida, go easy on him, I know that you feel like you got the rut of all this, but he's still in the same position as you."

"How did ye even-"

"Retired soothsayer, it's all in the fire." he said with a smile.

"Why are ye being nice tae me then? If ye don't like the way that I've been around him why would ye even help me?"

"That's what families do; they look out for each other. And even though it's not official, I consider you family. Because, when you take all of the other stuff away family's all you got left."

~::~

By the time Merida reached her room she didn't even bother to change

out of her clothes. She collapsed onto the bed, but sleep did not find her. Old Wrinkly's words about family played in her head.

It shot her like an arrow, the realization that they really were gone. She wouldn't be able to sword fight with her father anymore, or teach her brothers archery, or watch the effects of their many pranks; she would even miss arguing with her mother. The things she would give, just to go back home. But she couldn't, she was a Highlander who was now stuck in a sea of Vikings, and she feared she would drown.

* * *

><p>REVIEW!<p>

7. Chapter 6

A/N: I sort of experimented with Stoick's accent on this one, because he does kind of have that Scottish drawl to it (just a bit).

I have to say that this is one of my favorite chapters so far and it was really fun to write. Since this is chapter 6 (7, if you count the prologue) I just wanted to say the the story is almost half done. It will probably have 15 chapters at most. Just something to think about...

* * *

><p>"Fate is never fair. You are caught in a current much stronger than you are; struggle against it and you'll drown not just yourself but those who try to save you. Swim with it, and you'll survive" â€• Cassandra Clare

After Hiccup had taken Merida to Old Wrinkly's he made his way back to his house, meeting his father along the way. "I was beginning to wonder where ya were. Did ya find the girl?" he asked.

"Yea, I took her to Old Wrinkly's. She was bit by a venomous dragon."

"What good will he do? Th' man's half mad."

"He's still a good doctor, dad."

"I suppose. Go on and head home, I've got to finish up here."

~::~~

When Hiccup reached his house he went to the kitchen and pulled out a bowl and began to make himself some breakfast.

Upon hearing the door close he expected his father, but it was Merida instead.

She walked past him without saying a word, not out of spite Hiccup figured. Her eyes were half open and she didn't walk as fast as she normally did. She began to go up the stairs.

"I'm fixing me some breakfast, do you want some? I could bring it up to your room so you don't have to eat down here."

"No, I juist want tae sleep." she said waving the offer away. She turned toward him, Hiccup braced himself, nearly every word she had said to him had been a threat or an insult. They didn't bother him like she probably would have hopped; he had been called worse from much closer people.

"Before I forget, Old Sprinkly-"

"Old _Wrinkly_"

"Right, him, he wants tae talk tae ye later."

"Okay. Um, are you alright?"

"Yea, I'm juist tired," she held up her bandaged arm "and side effects I guess."

He nodded understanding and she continued up to her room.

~::~~

Hiccup felt like he was going in a circle, he had just left Old Wrinkly's and now he was back again. Not that he minded much, he seemed to be the only one in the village that actually understood Hiccup.

When he entered the hut he saw the old man sitting at his table drinking from his mug.

"Hiccup, you wanted to see me?" he said without even turning around.

"Merida said that _you_ wanted to see me." he said while walking over to the table.

"I had her deliver that message because I knew that you wanted to talk to me."

"How did you know that?"

"Retired or not I'm still a soothsayer. And I'm also your grandfather."

"You know that you're not supposed to do that anymore."

"Bah! I'm just dabbling; as long as I don't tell anyone my predictions it's fine."

Old Wrinkly had been known for causing a bit of trouble with his predictions when Hiccup was younger.

He used his walking stick to push out a chair for Hiccup to sit down in. As he did so Old Wrinkly pushed another mug across the table. "Gotta have my morning tea" he said "Now then, what's on your mind?"

~::~~

"And I don't even know what I'm going to do about Toothless. I tried to tell her about him. I don't even know where to begin."

"How about instead of telling her, you show her?"

"Just take her to the cove and say 'here's my pet dragon'. That's crazy!"

"And how does crazy usually work for you?"

"Normally pretty good. But it won't work. I told you already, I've tried to make her feel welcome, but everything I do fails. She won't have anything to do with me."

Old Wrinkly paused "Try again, you won't know unless you try. Things might be different this time."

"But-"

He held up a hand stopping his sentence. "Try again."

~::~~

Hiccup promised Old Wrinkly that he would keep trying. However there wasn't much he could do in the next couple of days because Merida was still recovering from the venom. Old Wrinkly's medicine wasn't an immediate cure, but it did keep it from killing her and helped speed up the process of getting it out of her system. She was left with cold sweats, high fevers and over all just feeling miserable.

On the third day around noon Merida came down stairs. She went to the kitchen to find some food, having not eaten anything for two days she was starving.

After rummaging through the cabinets she finally found some fruit. Merida gathered as many as she could carry in her arms and meant to head back up to her room and eat them. But as she exited the kitchen, Hiccup was just coming in.

"I see you're feeling better."

"Aye."

"How's your arm?"

"I don't know, I haven't looked at it yet."

"Right. So I was thinking that um maybe you'd..."

"That maybe I'd what?"

"Well you've been in that room for two days, and maybe it would be nice to get some fresh air?"

"Ye mean with ye?" he nodded. "Why should I go anywhere with ye?"

"Because I have something that I want to show you."

"What is it?"

"I can't tell you. I have to show you."

"Then show me 'ere."

"I can't, it's not here."

"Then where is it?"

"The forest..."

Merida stood there thinking for a moment and then walked by him and up to her room.

"You were wrong Wrinkly." he said to himself "She won't have anything to do with me. So much for trying."

A few minutes later Merida came back down the stairs. She had a belt that her sword was hooked to and a small bag to put the fruit in.

"What's with the sword?" Hiccup asked.

"I never leave wi'oot a weapon, and Raysnare would like some fresh air too."

"You don't really need a sword."

"I'll be th' judge of that."

~::~~

They walked in silence, except for the sound of Merida eating the fruit. She noticed that Hiccup was fiddling for something on his side when he suddenly slowed his pace.

"What?" Merida asked after she heard him mumble something.

"Nothing, I just forgot something. Can you wait here while I go get it? It won't take long, I'll be right back."

She nodded and he went back the way they came. But Merida wasn't about to wait around for him to come back. She wanted to see what he was up to, so she continued down the man-made path. Eventually she came across a tree that was nearly torn in two. She placed her hand on the pommel of her sword for reassurance. The scratch marks on the sides of it indicated that it wasn't a natural occurrence.

The top of the broken half lay near a ditch, which broken and dead trees' roots were exposed. At the end of the ditch was the top of a hill, as Merida continued farther in, she wondered what could be out this far that Hiccup wanted to show her.

She had never been this deep into the forest before, back home she did all the time, but she knew her way around those trees. These were foreign trees; ones that wouldn't help her find her way back if she got lost.

Two large boulders leaned onto one another, leaving a large enough space to pass through and into an enclosed space surrounded by larger boulders than Merida ever imagined. The tops of them spilled vegetation and gigantic roots from hundred year old trees into the area. At the bottom was a sizable body of water with a few fallen branches and moss covered rocks.

Merida jumped down from one rock to another until she reached the ground. As she picked up an apple that had fallen out of her pouch, something caught her eye of to the side where the sun's light didn't reach.

Something moved.

~::~~

All of Toothless' riding gear had been stored at the Cove. However Hiccup had forgotten his part of the gear and remembered it when they were almost halfway there. Even if Merida didn't like Toothless there was no reason why they couldn't finally go flying after she left.

"Sorry about that. Alright, then-â€|Merida?" Hiccup had reached the spot where she was supposed to wait, but she was nowhere in sight. "Merida?" he called her name a few more times trying to locate her.

Then he heard the scream, which of course came from the direction of the Cove. "Oh no."

~::~~

He got there as fast as he could, but by the time he did he saw that Merida's sword had been discarded to the side, now she held a spear-like stick in defense and Toothless was closing in on her. Hiccup tried to draw Toothless' attention away from Merida as he got to the ground by calling his name.

As Merida was backing away she didn't see the raised root behind her and she tripped. There was no time to get up so she had the stick pointed out so that if the dragon jumped onto her it would kill him, even he killed her first.

"No!" Hiccup yelled. He managed to get in between them just before Toothless was going to attack; he took the stick from Merida and flung it away and then focused on calming Toothless down.

All Merida knew was that her defense was gone, but she was still alive. She didn't even notice Hiccup until after he helped her up. Once her senses were regained she yanked her arm from his grip.

"What th' hell is wrong with ye?!" she yelled at him. "Or was this yer plan? Take me far away from th' village and have a dragon attack me?!" Not that she had a strong belief that anyone would save her.

"No, that's not why I brought you out here. Let me explain-"

Merida's attention was brought back to the dragon when he growled at her. She wondered why it wasn't attacking him. Hiccup turned to face the beast and looked back at Merida.

"Merida, Toothless. Toothlessâ€|Merida." He said while making the appropriate gestures. The dragon snarled at her and she took a few steps back.

"Wait, Toothless? It has a name? Ye mean that _thing_ is yer pet?"

"Well I wouldn't say _pet_â€|"

"Yer aff yer heid!"

"What?"

"Ye'r crazy!" Merida quickly looked around for her sword, keeping her eyes on Toothless as she picked it up.

"Whoa, whoa, where are you going?" Hiccup asked when she started making it to the way out.

"I'm nae going tae stick aroond and get attacked again."

"Merida," he reached out and grabbed her arm, "please, he won't, you just scared him."

"I scared _him_?! He's a dragon!"

"Please, just stay for today, andâ€|I'll never bother you again."

"Give me one good reason why I should."

Honestly Hiccup couldn't think of a real reason. Toothless wasn't exactly a secret, so if she ran into the village and told anyone it wouldn't really matter. The only reason why Merida should stay was so she could get to know Toothless, that was the whole reason he had brought her here.

He didn't have an answer.

Hiccup let go of her arm and turned away.

"Go then. I'm sorry about what happened." he said as he walked away.

Merida realized that Hiccup hadn't intended for her to get hurt, he never had. He was only doing what he felt was the right thing to do.

"Fine," she said after a moment's hesitation. "I'll stay."

Hiccup turned around. "What did you say?"

"I said, I'll stay. But if tha' beast does anything-"

"He won't." he said assuring her. Although Merida was still a bit uneasy, because how do you stay around a creature who already tried

to kill you?

~::~~

"Sae how'd ye dae it?" Merida asked.

"Do what?"

"Get a dragon who is, I quote, _th' unholy offspring of lightning 'n' death itself_, tae not kill ye?"

"It wasn't that hard really, considering I'm not much of a threat, but it was no picnic either." He paused. "A fish."

"A fish?"

"It was a peace offering."

"Dae ye think that could work with me? I don't exactly want tae be on a dragon's bad side"

"You could try it. But I didn't bring any with me."

She looked at the lake behind her. "Where there's water there's fish, right?" She got up off the ground and walked over to where the water was shallow. Not even caring that the bottom of her skirt would get wet she walked in. She placed he hands in the water and stood still, waiting for the fish to come to her.

As she was doing this Hiccup didn't notice until it was too late that Toothless had crept up behind her.

"Toothless, no!" Hiccup yelled just before Merida was pushed into the water.

When Merida resurfaced the dragon snorted and made an animal-like laugh.

"Ye devil beast! Are ye laughing at me?" she moved to get out and Toothless ran.

"Are you okay?" Hiccup asked half laughing. He offered a hand to help her up but she didn't take it.

"I'm fine. It's juist water after all."

"Too bad about the fish though, they probably won't come back this way for a while."

"Who said I didn't get th' fish?" She revealed the hand that she had hidden behind her back. She held it by the base of its tail, and it started flapping in the air, clinging to the rest of its short life.

"How did youâ€¦|"

"Did ye underestimate mah skills laddie?"

The fish must have mustered up all the energy it could, because with one flap it caused Merida to lose her grip and it smacked her in the

face and went back into the water.

Hiccup tried not to laugh. "I don't think you have to worry about a peace offering though. It seems that he realizes you're not a threat."

Merida rolled her eyes and began wringing the water out of her hair.

"Ye'r lucky, ye know."

"How's that?"

"Ye hae all of yer family and even yer pet 'ere." she said as she walked over to a nearby rock to sit on.

"Well he's not really a pet, he's more like a..." he held the syllable shortly as he tried to find the right word.

"A best friend?" Merida finished for him.

"Ya, he's like my best friend. The bestest friend I ever had. I know that it sounds weird, but-"

"I don't think it sounds weird. Mah best friend is a horse named Angus."

"A horse? I've never seen one in real life before."

"Really?" Merida asked amazed. "Ye should've seen him, he's such a beauty. But I wasn't allowed tae bring him with me, sae he had tae stay home."

Hiccup hesitated before asking "What's your home like?"

Merida was completely caught off guard by the question. "Um, well it's nae that different than here really. Lots of trees fur one. Only I lived in a castle, instead of a hut. Maybe ye'll see it when they realize that this treaty business doesn't benefit them and I get tae go home."

"Merida-"

"They're notâ€|going tae change their mindsâ€|are they? I'm not going tae get tae go home am I?"

Deep down she knew the answer, she didn't want to believe it. She needed someone to tell her what she already knew; she had to hear it from another person.

"I'm sorry" Was all he said.

~::~

The day was now coming to an end and Merida and Hiccup were heading back to the village.

"I don't think that was too bad." Hiccup said "Considering it was your first time meeting him I think it went pretty well."

"Are ye saying tha' if it hadn't gone well then I would hae been eaten?"

"It's a possibility..."

"And what would ye hae done if that had happened?"

"I don't even want to think about that."

They walked a little more and Merida kept eyeing him.

"I've been meaning tae ask, what's with th' getup?"

"Oh this?" Hiccup said pulling at his harness. "It keeps me from falling off Toothless when we're flying. Although we didn't exactly get to do that today, but I brought it in case we did."

"Ye'r telling me that not only have ye trained a dragon, but ye fly on it as well?"

"Yep."

"Ye'r impossible."

"Not impossible, just improbable."

Merida was going to say something else but something caught her eye.

"Is thatâ€¦smoke?"

They were close enough to the village that the amount of trees had thinned out and a tall pillar of smoke could be seen towering over them. In the distance shouting could be heard.

~::~

By the time they arrived to the scene there were already two lines of people, one to bring buckets of water in and the other to take the empty buckets back to be refilled. But any sensible person could tell that the house couldn't be saved in time.

Somebody yelled and began pushing through the crowd. Stoick stopped her before she could get close enough to the burning structure.

"Habert!" she called into the fire. "Please, he's still in there! Somebody save my son!" she continued crying out for help, but going in there was a suicide mission.

The front of the house collapsed, the water line had disbanded and now stood a safe distance away. The fire roared and the wind changed.

"Don't let it get to the trees!" someone said.

Everything slowed as Merida watched it unfurl before her, from the pleading mother to the others running to aid. They were no different than her. They had families whom they loved and strived to come home to, they had hopes and dreams, and failures that they had learned

from. They were people.

Upon hearing the mother call her child's name again Merida saw an opening into the house. Before Hiccup, or anyone for that matter, could stop her, she ran into the burning house.

Hiccup moved to go after her but he was stopped by Gobber.

"Are ya out o' your mind? What are ya doing?"

"Merida went in there!"

~::~~

The part she entered had not been completely engulfed by the flames. Instantly she was coughing as the thick smoke threatened to suffocate her. Through her gasps and coughs for air she called the boy's name. A log from the ceiling fell and Merida jumped back, bumping into something behind her. It was a small table that was surprisingly unburned.

"Mommy?" it had been almost a whisper and Merida would have missed it if she hadn't been listening hard enough.

Under the table was a little boy who couldn't be any older than five; his face was covered with ash, apart from the few streaks running down his cheeks from where he had been crying.

"Hey there wee laddie." he scrunched farther back under the table. "It's okay. I'm nae going tae hurt ye, I'm going tae get ye oot of 'ere." she offered her hand, after a short hesitation he finally took it. Just as Merida picked him up another part of the ceiling came crashing down, causing the boy to scream. She pushed his face against her shirt to shield him from the debris and to prevent any more smoke from entering his lungs. As for her breathing it was getting more difficult, and if she didn't make it out soon she wouldn't make it out at all.

The opening which she had come in through was now gone and it looked like there wasn't another way out.

The sound of a wall collapsing caught Merida's attention, and for a brief second before the smoke filled its place, she could see outside. There was only a small spot that the flames hadn't closed in on yet. But by the time Merida would get there it would be too late and they would be completely trapped.

"Hold on tight." She told him.

It was a long shot, but it was also the only choice left; jump over the fire.

~::~~

The house collapsed on itself. The mother had stopped screaming and just stared at the ruins. The flames had shrunk considerably in size with nothing left to fuel them.

"What's that?" someone asked. There was something moving around amongst the piles of ash and burnt wood.

Merida swayed as she tried to keep her balance with the uneven ground and lack of air. The woman approached her and noticed the bundle she held close. It moved to reveal two eyes.

"Mommy?" the woman let out a cry of relief and took the child from Merida.

"Thank you. Thank you for saving my son."

Merida gave her a weak smile before she started violently coughing.

"Somebody help her!"

"Get some water!"

She was unsure who said what, but soon enough a large mug of water was in front of her.

Once her breathing was, for the most part, back to normal she overheard Stoick talking to the mother and son, asking them what happened.

"I just went out to gather from the garden for supper. Next thing I know the house is on fire!"

The little boy looked to the ground. "I just wanted to play. He tried to fly away but I wouldn't let him."

"Who's him, Habert?"

"The Terror." He said quietly.

"This is why _all_ dragons are a danger to us! All they know is destruction!" Stoick announced, speaking loud were everyone could hear him, especially one person, who he glared at while he spoke; Hiccup. "Perhaps a lesson was learned here."

Trying to avoid his father's stare he went and sat by Merida.

"Why'd you do that? I thought you hated Vikings."

"I do. But she wasn't a Viking when she was trying tae get tae her son, she was a mother. And also, I thought, what ifâ€¦what if it was one of mah brothers. I'd hope that yer people would save them if th' roles were reversed."

When she looked down she noticed that her skirt was singed in various places and covered with ash; the same went for her shirt with a few rips on the sleeves.

She would defiantly need some new clothes.

* * *

><p>REVIEW!<p>

A/N: I really have no excuse for the lateness

* * *

><p>"History is filled with brilliant people who wanted to fix things and just made them worse." â€" Chuck Palahniuk

Bizarre. That seemed to be the only word that fit the weather conditions on Berk. Some days were like a warm spring day, others it rained, and then there were the cold days, most of which were tolerable, but there were also blizzards. And that was only in the span of two weeks! The place seemed to have no concept of different seasons.

Over the course of the night it had snowed, and not lightly by any means. Merida had seen snow before, but never to where it nearly reached her knees. Luckily she didn't have the added difficulty of a skirt to get in the way.

The fire took place only a few days ago. Upon saving the small boy, her clothes had been burned. Merida had never been allowed to wear trousers before, so she welcomed the opportunity to wear them when it came. Her new undershirt was skin tight, but surprisingly kept her warm; over it she wore her new forearm cuffs and another shirt. Merida also wore a fur vest similar to Hiccup's, only it tucked into the thick belt tied around her waist.

Her days of wandering aimlessly throughout the forest were over. Now that she and Hiccup were on better terms, and she knew about the beast that was his pet, Merida had a place to go, and also something to do.

The dragon had presented a challenge to her. It liked Hiccup and was friendly with him, and even though she wasn't a threat, it let her know that she wasn't welcome. Merida was determined to get him to like her, because having a dragon on your bad side isn't really a good idea.

~::~~

The snow crunched under her awkward footsteps. It was midday; the snow had melted some, but was still difficult to travel through it. Merida stopped to gather herself, suddenly she felt as though she were being followed. She turned around, but no one was there. Just as she was about to move again a snowball hit the tree in front of her.

"Who's there?"

There was no sign of anyone and thought that maybe the snow had just fallen from a tree. She began walking again but another snowball flew past her.

She turned around and as her eyes searched through the trees she bent down and gathered snow in her hands. She threw it at the tree where she believed the person was hiding. No one appeared so she proceeded around a tree out of view and began to carefully climb it. Once she reached a steady branch she waited.

Finally he peeked around the tree from where he was hiding.

It was the boy she saved from the fire, Habert. Recently he had taken a liking to following her around, not that Merida minded, he reminded her of her brothers.

Merida waited until he was under the branch before jumping and grabbing the one above causing the snow to fall. He was instantly buried.

By the time she got down his head popped out from under the snow.

"That wasn't fair" he said while laughing.

He started to gather snow in his hands, that's when Merida backed away.

~::~~

As she was '_running' _away she looked back to make sure that she wasn't going too fast. While doing this she rammed into something. It couldn't have been a tree because she was face down in the snow and something warm was under her. She propped herself up on her arms and looked down.

Hiccup.

He groaned and opened his eyes. Their faces turned a light pink when they realized how close they were. Hiccup began stammering away while Merida tried to get up, but the snow made her efforts clumsy and difficult.

"What are you doing?" a voice above them asked.

"Nothing, Habert." Merida said as she finally managed to get up. "I think Hiccup wanted tae play too."

The boy's playful smile fell slightly. "I have to go home now."

"Alright," she said somewhat disappointed "can ye git back on yer own?"

He nodded and glanced at Hiccup before he left.

"What was that all about?" Merida asked.

"Most parents don't want me around their kids. They think I'm a bad influence." He looked at Merida "We should get going."

~::~~

Toothless growled as her hand got closer, she flinched back.

"You have to go slow; show him that he can trust you."

"What dae ye think I'm doing? This devil-beast is hopeless!"

He snarled in reply, Hiccup tried to calm him down.

"Oh shut it, ye over grown lizard."

"I don't think insulting him will help either."

"Then what dae ye want me tae dae then?" she asked "I juist tried the hand thing, that didn't work. When I tried tae git a fish he pushed me in! Ye can't dae much with an animal that hates ye."

"He doesn't hate youâ€¦." Merida gave him a look suggesting otherwise. "He just really, really doesn't like youâ€¦!?"

"Well that's reassuring. What's the difference?" Hiccup found that he couldn't answer.

"That's what I thought." She sighed "I'm calling it a day."

She made her way out of the Cove as Hiccup turned to Toothless. Now that the girl was gone you could see his enthusiasm to go flying.

"Oh no, we're not going anywhere until you're nicer." Toothless snorted in his face. "You're not helping your case any."

~::~~

It didn't take long for Hiccup to catch up with Merida.

"I guess we'll try again tomorrow?"

"Perhaps next week. I'm a bit tired of a dragon constantly growling at me."

They walked in the cold silence, with only the sound of crunching snow between them.

"What was-" Merida began, but paused, unsure if she should finish. "What was that about, earlier? When ye said that ye were a bad influence?"

"Oh, thatâ€¦they say that because I'm not normal."

"How dae ye mean?"

"You mean you noticed it yet?"

Merida shrugged, and Hiccup chuckled lightly.

"I'm the most non-Viking there is. Even you're more of a Viking than I am."

"That's nae true."

"Really? Have you ever seen a Viking like me before? I mean I'm the chief's son, I'm supposed to be someone that parents want their children looking up to, but instead they're told to stay way." He flailed his arms as he continued. "I have a pet dragon for Thor's sake!"

Merida was quiet, thinking of what to say "You're nae a bad person, or a bad influence. Ye'r juist different."

"Because that's so much better."

They had reached the village by the time the sun began to set.

"Different isn't always bad, sometimes it's an advantage."

Hiccup wished he could truly believe her.

~::~~

When they reached the house Merida went to her room, Hiccup was going to do the same but was stopped by his father.

"We need to talk," he glanced upstairs "alone." He then walked out of the house, expecting Hiccup to follow.

" 'How was your day, son?' " he said mimicking his father. "Oh you know, the usual, spent the day with Toothless and Merida. 'That's great son, I'm glad you're getting along with her.' Yeah, just great." He muttered.

He quickly caught up with his father who was just outside, but not within range to hear from inside.

"So what's this about?"

"The council's patience is wearing thin, Hiccup. If she's not going to sign the treaty then she has no purpose here. And you know what will happen if this treaty fails. So I suggest you fix the problem."

"And just to refresh my memory. What will happen if it fails?"

"War." He said bluntly "If they cannot prove to hold up their end why should we?"

"But she's just one person-"

"Yet, she represents her people." He paused. "She has until the end of the week."

"The end of the week?! But we're just barely beginning to talk."

"The council won't take any excuses. It doesn't matter if she doesn't like you. Feelings aren't required in an arranged marriage."

Hiccup was unable to respond before Stoick told him goodnight and went back inside.

He had three days to convince her, he had been given an impossible task.

~::~~

He stayed awake nearly all night, thinking of scenarios, every one turned into a disaster.

It was midday before he got the courage to knock on her door. When no one answered he cracked the door open and looked inside. She was lying on the bed asleep. He walked over to her. It was the calmest he'd ever seen her. She was actually really pretty; not that he hadn't noticed it before. He wouldn't really mind waking up to a face like that, even if she did drool.

He used to be lucky to see her once a day, and when they did meet she was hostile. But things seemed like they were changing; only now Hiccup feared that they would go back to square one after today.

Gently he nudged her; eventually it got to the point where he was shaking her. Finally she woke. "What is it?"

"It's past noon. You missed breakfast."

Merida sat up and rubbed her hand over her eyes. Her red mass of hair looked like it would be a nightmare to tame. She looked at Hiccup as if just realizing he was there.

"What are ye daein' in mah room?"

"I came to wake you up."

"I'm awake noo."

"I also wanted to talk to you."

"Aboot what?"

"Um, well, we've been getting along lately, don't you think?"

"I guess sae."

"And you've adjusted to life here, and one little piece of paper shouldn't stop you from being fully accepted."

Merida's stomach began to sink. "What are ye getting at?"

"I just thought that we were starting to get along that--"

"Stop rambling 'n' just tell me what ye'r talking about."

"You need to sign the treaty." He said quickly.

Hiccup was surprised when she didn't immediately try to injure him. Instead she got out of bed.

"Sae this was yer plan all along?" she said in a clam tone, which was much scarier than her blowing up. "I can't believe I fell for it."

"Merida I--"

"Ye pretend tae make me feel welcomed. Ye pretended that ye actually wanted tae be mah friend 'n' that ye cared."

"That's not why-

"Git oot of mah room."

"But-

"I said, git oot of mah room!" She said louder when he didn't move, clearly starting to lose her cool.

"Merida, please let me explain."

"I'm nae going tae listen tae any more of yer lies! Noo git oot!"

When Hiccup wasn't looking apparently Merida had grabbed her sword from somewhere and was now pointing it at him.

He put his hands up "Whoa, whoa, whoa! Please if you'll just give me a chance to explain-

"I'm nae hearing it laddie. Noo either ye git oot or I'm going tae make ye."

She had him backed all the way to the door now.

"If you don't sign the treaty it will start a war!"

"A war? Thay cannae dae that. I'm 'ere, that was the whole point of me being 'ere."

"Yes! But only if you signed the treaty, which you didn't do."

She looked him up and down "I dae nae believe ye. What's the real reason why ye want me tae sign it? Sae willing tae take away mah freedom sae ye'll hae more of it? Or are ye that desperate for me tae share yer bed? I hadn't pegged ye as that type of person, but I guess I was wrong. Ye Vikings are all the same."

"Merida, please just listen. If you haven't signed it by the end of the week then the council will see it as an act of war."

But Merida wasn't hearing it; she slammed the door in his face.

~::~

She had locked herself in her room since yesterday. Hiccup didn't even try to persuade her to come out because he knew where that would go. He did however leave her food outside her door; whenever he came back it was gone. At least she wasn't going on a hunger strike.

Hiccup looked out his window and noticed that the sun was beginning to set. Tomorrow was the last day. He needed to come up with an effective plan, and fast.

~::~

Meanwhile Merida had formed a plan of her own.

It was a good thing she didn't have a lot. She only had one small bag to put everything in; which included a spare set of clothes, a blanket to keep warm, and some food.

She waited for nightfall before slipping on her cloak and then adjusting her weapons. She cracked open her door and peeped out. There was a dim light downstairs that indicated the fire was dying.

She went down stairs and snuck out the back door.

~::~

She headed to the Cove. She had never gone at night, but it seemed her feet knew the way.

When she spotted the sleeping dragon as quietly as she could she climbed down and began to search, but couldn't find what she was looking for.

She had only been in the Cove alone once before and that time didn't turn out to well; now she sort of had an idea of what to expect.

A twig suddenly snapped under her foot. Merida looked back to see if the dragon was still there. It was gone, nowhere to be seen.

She quickly looked around for it. How could a beast that large move so quietly?

When she turned it was then that she noticed two glowing eyes glaring at her, and then it charged. It was hard not to unsheathe her sword; instead she ironically remembered Hiccup's words "show him that he can trust you". She reached behind and pulled out something else, just in time too. The dragon was only a few inches from her.

Cautiously the dragon sniffed the object she held out to it. A fish.

Merida took it in both hands and held it out to him.

"Go on, take it. It's a truce offering."

It sniffed the fish again before quickly taking it from her.

She grimaced in disgust as she shook the dragon slobber off her hands. It could have gone worse.

The dragon eyed her, as if it were asking for more. She backed away.

"No, no, I don't hae anymore." He paused as though he had heard that before. "But I dae hae something a little better. A proposal."

He tilted his head to the side as though he actually understood the words she was saying.

"I know that ye don't want me 'ere, 'n' I want tae leave. I can't fly, but ye can. Perhaps we can put aside oor differences 'n' work

something out."

* * *

><p>REVIEW!<p>

9. Chapter 8

A/N: This is so late and I'm so sorry. Damn fight scenes give me writers block, and it doesn't help that I suck at writing them either. If you look real close you can see a bit of book Hiccup.

* * *

><p>"All the decisive blows are struck left-handed."â€• Walter Benjamin

Hiccup was restless; there was no way he could possibly sleep. Tomorrow was the last day and he still didn't have a plan, and it didn't look like one was coming either. Up until now Merida had been treated as a guest, but if she didn't sign the treaty she was likely to be arrested and held as the first prisoner of the war to come. Although Vikings were normally associated with being mindless brutes, they took their political affairs seriously.

He heard light footsteps outside his door. He knew it was Merida, probably sneaking into the kitchen.

Five minutes passed, then ten and eventually twenty, yet he still didn't hear her come back. So he got up to investigate.

The kitchen was empty; perhaps she had snuck past him.

Hiccup went back upstairs as he reached the top he noticed that Merida's door wasn't completely shut, which, considering the circumstances was odd.

Hesitantly he walked to her door and knocked lightly. When no answer came he pushed the door open. She wasn't there. Not only was she not there but the majority of her things were missing as well.

~::~

Merida didn't know how Hiccup ever managed to get this contraption onto the beast, the lack of light didn't help either.

She cursed under her breath as the saddle continued to prove difficult to adjust. She almost considered riding without it, but given the circumstances of actually flying, she couldn't risk falling off and didn't think it would be too comfortable either. She tightened the strap, but he protested. If it was a notch looser then it wouldn't stay.

"What are you doing?"

Merida froze at the sound of the voice. She didn't even have to turn around to know that it was Hiccup. In fact she didn't move at all, with the small thought that if she didn't then maybe he wouldn't see

her.

Hiccup noticed the poorly placed saddle, and began to put the pieces together.

"You're not actually trying to steal my dragon and run away are you?"

"I wouldn't call it stealing, exactly. Borrowing would be a better word." She said as she turned to face him.

He stared at her in disbelief. Had he really heard her right? She couldn't be serious.

Hiccup was never one to get angry, irritated yes, but never full on mad.

"And what were you planning to do if this plan actually worked? You know that if you leave that you would be putting your people at risk! Even if you didn't go home they would still get hurt! And what about Toothless? You say you're borrowing him, but how's he supposed to get back on his own?! Are you really that selfish?!"

"Ye'r calling me selfish?! Ye'r th' one that all of a sudden started pressuring me tae sign that damned treaty!"

"You think that I wanted this? To be in this position?! We're both kids! We shouldn't have to worry about stuff like this until years from now," he flailed his arms in the air "but that's not how it turned out!"

"I don't care. I'm leaving; mah only regret will be tha' I did nae dae it sooner."

"You're not taking Toothless." He said getting between them.

"Fine. I can find another way off this miserable island."

She started to walk away but he stopped her. "Let me go!" She said trying to yank her arm from his grip, but he still held on.

"No! You need to stop and think about what you're really doing!"

"I'm not signing it! The only way that ye could make me is if ye were tae fight me!"

"Fight you?" He thought for a moment. "Okay then...yea, I challenge you."

"What? Ye'r nae serious."

"I am." he released her arm "I challenge you to a duel, Merida of DunBroch." The way he had said her name let her know that he meant business.

She scoffed "Alright then, state yer terms."

"If I win then you have to sign the treaty. No arguing and no running away."

"Fine. But when I win, ye personally hae tae take me home, and I never hae tae come back. Since ye challenged me then I get tae pick what the challenge is, and I choose archery."

"That might be how they do things in the Highlands, but here things are different. The challenger chooses the challenge."

"Then what would ye choose? Something tae dae with dragons?" She said gesturing towards Toothless. "That's nae fair."

"No I wouldn't do that." He paused. "I choose a sword duel."

Merida started to laugh.

"What's so funny?"

"Yeâ€¦fight meâ€¦in a sword duel?" she replied between laughs. Eventually she regained her composure. "Ye dae know tha' I am no stranger tae sword fighting."

"I know."

"Yet ye still chose it, knowing fully well that I can beat ye."

Hiccup shrugged. "If you know that you can beat me then you should have no problem agreeing to the terms."

She studied him, wondering if this was some ploy. Why would he make it so easy for her?

"Fine. When and where will this duel take place?"

"Tomorrow," he said "in the arena, in front of the village."

"I've never seen anyone sae eager tae humiliate themselves."

He ignored her comment. "Do we have an agreement or not?"

"Yea, I agree tae the terms."

He held out his hand for her to shake and she took it.

~::~~

"You did what?!" Stoick stared at his son in disbelief.

Hiccup had just finished telling him about the fight that was supposed to happen later that day.

"It was the only way I could get her to agree."

"What if you lose? We can't afford for you to play around Hiccup. This is not a game."

"Dad, I know what I'm doing."

"I sure hope so, for your sake."

~::~~

No tree deserved this; it was small and thin and had countless cuts in it. Merida had wasted no time to practice. With a spin she delivered another blow, but this time the tree groaned and started to crack. She stepped out of the way before it fell.

Merida wondered what Hiccup had been thinking. There was no way he could beat her. She was almost as good at sword fighting as she was at archery, almost. And what was that about a war? Surely he couldn't have been serious. Merida had stayed behind while she watched her family sail away. She lived under the same roof as her betrothed; she was even starting to consider him to be a friend. What more did the council want? Why did it have to be marriage? Why not a nice friendship treaty instead?

Merida sat on the fallen tree.

In reality she knew this wasn't Hiccup's fault, he was right, they were just kids. But it's not exactly like she could take her anger out on the chief or the council.

He was the easier target, and she would do everything in her power to beat him.

~::~~

When Merida came back to the village she received short glances followed by whispers. By now the entire village was talking about the duel that would take place later, some were even placing bets, which were interesting to say the least. There was no real easy way to bid either. Bet on Merida and you support the foreigner. Bet on Hiccup and you, well bet on Hiccupâ€¦..

She made her way back to the house and saw Hiccup inside when she got there.

Shouldn't he at least be training or something? With twig arms like that Merida wasn't sure that he would even be able to lift a sword. They exchanged quick glances and Merida continued up the stairs.

~::~~

Finally the time came.

They met at the entrance into the arena. Merida had brought Raysnare, obviously, and Hiccup carried a sword that was a bit shorter than hers.

Merida spoke first. "I'm assuming they aren't going tae let us fight tae the death, sae how is the winner determined?"

"Whoever admits defeat first."

"Looks like ye are goin' tae lose then. Even if I were tae be knocked off mah feet countless times, I don't give up."

"I'm not giving up either. The alternative is winning by first blood."

Merida looked at him. "Sae ye'r saying that I juist need tae cut ye."

"Or vice versa."

Merida didn't get a chance to say anything back because, Hiccup was already waking in to the arena, she quickly followed. Looking up she saw Vikings lining the outside. They were talking quietly amongst themselves.

Merida and Hiccup stood in the middle facing each other with nearly the entire village staring down at them. She pushed the queasy feeling aside, she had to focus.

Briefly she thought back to the dragon fight that happened here. Although the outcome wouldn't be nearly as gruesome, Merida wondered who was the dragon, and who was the warrior.

Hiccup on the other hand was as nervous as an animal in the slaughter house. He knew what Merida was capable of, yet he still challenged her. Stupid on his part really.

But he was here now and he had to try. But just trying wouldn't be good enough, he had to win, or else things wouldn't end well for anyone. He had gone to Old Wrinkly earlier that day for advice; he hoped that the old man's words would pay off.

There was a sound signaling for them to start.

Merida took the first swing; Hiccup barely dodged it in time.

She swung again, aiming toward his middle, with no time to get out of the way he used his sword to deflect it. It went on like that for a few minutes, with the crowd shouting and Merida on the offence.

This time Hiccup swung with his right hand, Merida easily blocked it and in the process of doing so had knocked Hiccup's sword out of his hand. He ran to retrieve it with Merida on his heels. Before he could pick it up her sword clashed in front of him, separating him from his defense. He backed away as she got closer, yet unfortunately he tripped over his footing and fell.

The gods must have really hated him.

She stood over him and pointed her sword at him, it was over.

Don't fight their way, you're not them.

Old Wrinkly's words from before flashed in his mind.

The metal was close to his face, he had to do something and he had to do it now.

Hiccup swung his legs out from under her, causing her to fall. Immediately he got up and fetched his sword with his left hand.

By the time he turned back around Merida was standing again, and didn't look happy.

She scoffed when she noticed that he wasn't holding his sword in the correct hand.

They charged at each other, meeting their weapons in the middle with a horrible sound.

Merida was breathing heavily, pushing her sword against his, trying to get the upper hand.

Hiccup pushed back, but stopped and ducked under her, causing her to stumble forward.

Quickly she regained herself and charged at him again. Hiccup blocked her swing in an awkward placement of swords. Merida was used to fighting normal opponents, people who used their right hand. Hiccup was using his left and it threw her off.

This time it was Hiccup who was pushing against the swords. He twisted his wrist, moving his sword with it and effectively threw Merida's sword to the side. Before she could recover from the shock of actually being disarmed, her legs were knocked from under her and she fell.

She didn't even have a chance to get up before a horn sounded. It was then that her cheek started to sting, she raised a hand to it and when she brought it back she saw blood. When had he even cut her?

She had lost.

She had lost, and now she had to sign the treaty.

~::~~

The room felt ten times smaller than the last time she had been here, and the parchment on the table seemed to take up the majority of the space.

She stepped forward and a writing feather was handed to her.

A deal was a deal. She leaned forward and slowly signed her name.

"Once your parents are able to return, we will have the ceremony." Stoick said, but Merida remained quiet.

"Now then." He announced joyfully "let's go celebrate my son's victory!"

Merida was left behind in a room that now seemed too big.

~::~~

Merida made her way back to the house unnoticed.

She hadn't unpacked her things from last night so all she had to do was grab the bag and her bow, Naris.

She went out the back door and headed to the woods. She wasn't

planning on running away exactly, just taking a very, very long vacation.

~::~~

Normally it wouldn't have taken Hiccup this long to quietly slip away. But since he had won the challenge and '_proved to be a Viking after all',_ he was the center of attention.

He was surprised by the outcome; he didn't actually expect to win. He knew Merida was the better fighter, stronger and fiercer. Hiccup was still baffled that he'd won.

Eventually he came up with an excuse and managed to get away, and when he did he went looking for Merida.

~::~~

Tears slipped down her face. She couldn't understand why she was crying, she was supposed to be angry.

Wiping her tears away she sat on a nearby rock.

She didn't really have a plan, other than to get away. She didn't even know how to build a boat so she could sail away, if not home then somewhere else.

Maybe she could become one of those forest people from the stories travelers would tell.

The sound of numerous twigs breaking brought her from her thoughts. She stood and her hands instantly went to her bow.

Hiccup stumbled out of the foliage. Why was she not surprised.

He eyed her hands on the bow, and held up his to show that he was unarmed.

"What dae ye want?" she spat.

"I just wanted to talk." He said slowly.

"There's nothing tae talk about." She turned to leave but Hiccup rushed in front of her. He opened his mouth to say something but didn't get the chance.

"I thought tha' ye were different, but it turns oot that ye'r juist like them! Manipulating people juist tae get what ye want!"

Her hair was ablaze like fire and her eye grew colder, like a harsh Berk winter. She was her own terrible storm and he was the one who caused it.

"Give me one good reason why I shouldn't run ye through right noo."

"Because there's another part of the deal we shook on."

"What other part? The deal was if ye won then I sign the treaty. I did that, in case ye missed it!"

"There was also a part about not running away."

"I signed the damned treaty what more dae ye want from me?!"

Hiccup hesitated "Come to the Cove with me."

"Im nae going anywhere with ye." She shoved by him and started walking away.

"Do you want to see your family again?"

Merida stopped.

"What are ye talking about?"

"That was the other part of my dealâ€¦I justâ€¦didn't tell you."

"What are ye saying exactly?"

"I know you miss them, even if they did leave you here." He paused, but when she said nothing he continued. "After you signed the treaty I was planning on taking you to visit them."

Merida looked dumbfounded. "Why would-why would ye dae that?"

"Because you're my friend."

~::~~

They agreed to meet at the Cove when night fell, giving Hiccup time to gather his things.

The saddle was already placed on Toothless and Hiccup was hooking the bags onto it.

"Ye'r really going tae take me tae see them?" Merida asked, still skeptical.

"Yes, I really am."

Once he made sure that the bag wouldn't fall off he got on Toothless and hooked his harness to the saddle.

When he held out a hand to Merida she hesitated before taking it.

She lightly placed her hands on his shoulders.

"I'm surprised yer da let ye dae this."

Hiccup fidgeted slightly "He doesn't exactly know I'm doing thisâ€¦."

"Oh."

Changing the subject Hiccup patted Toothless. "Okay bud, let's go."

Merida watched as his wings spread out. Without warning she was forced back as he took off. She screamed trying to hold on, grabbing whatever she could. She managed to pull herself up and buried her face into Hiccup's back.

She had rode Angus countless times, but dragon riding was nothing like horseback riding. Merida didn't know what she was thinking when she thought that she could actually fly away by herself.

Once the flying was steadier she loosened her grip and looked around.

They were above the clouds now and stars sparkled overhead.

"This is amazing." She said. "I don't see why the others don't dae this."

"It's not the Viking way." It was then that Hiccup noticed that Merida's hands weren't on his shoulders anymore, but instead around his waist, she didn't seem to notice yet.

"Are ye sure he can far enough? It took us three weeks by boat tae get here."

"Toothless is the fastest dragon on record. It'll take a few days, maybe a week and we'll be island hopping, so we're not over water the entire time."

They exited the patch of clouds and flew over the moonlit water into the night.

* * *

><p>REVIEW!<p>

10. Chapter 9

A/N: After almost 4 long months I finally got my ass in gear and finished this chapter. Most of all I would like to thank you all for putting up with me and for all the support and reviews, they really help a lot.

* * *

><p>"Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and for a talk beside the fire: it is the time for home." â€• Edith Sitwell

The wind howled outside, and the snow blurred the landscape. What started as an innocent snow had turned into a blizzard. The fire crackled as more wood was placed to fuel it. They had been lucky to find the cave for shelter before things turned bad. They had roughly two days behind them and it was nice to actually rest.

Currently Merida was huddled in front of the fire rubbing her hands together trying to keep warm. Hiccup sat on the other side leaning against Toothless, who was asleep behind him.

"I wonder if they've sent out a search party yet." Merida said suddenly.

"What?"

"Ye being the chief's son and all, yer disappearance isn't exactly goin' tae go unnoticed."

"I left a note just before we left. So unless he thinks I'm lying or that you kidnapped me, he shouldn't have sent one out."

"I easily could if I wanted tae ye know. Kidnap ye that is." She said with a smile tugging at her lips.

"I don't doubt that." He noticed her shiver. "Are you cold?"

Sure the fire was warm, but it did little to help the actual temperature and the stray gusts of air that found their way into the cave.

"You can come over here." he gestured to the spot beside him. "Toothless is pretty warm and-"

"I'm fine."

"Are you sure? You look pretty cold to me."

"I said I'm fine didn't I?" he could feel her hostility coming back and dropped the subject. He didn't want to backtrack on the progress that he'd made so far.

He turned to look out the opening of the cave. "It's really coming down out there."

"Aren't there blizzards on Berk?"

"Rarely, but even when there are you can at least see a building or two."

They sat there in silence for a while before Merida pulled the blanket tighter around her.

"I'm curious about something." She said, Hiccup looked at her. "If yer tribe kills dragons on site, no questions asked, why didn't they kill Toothless?"

He was taken back by her sudden question, but then lowered his eyes to the ground.

"The short version: he's a bribing piece to make sure I stay in line."

"And the long version?"

He met her eyes. Hiccup didn't think that she would actually care about what happened, but since she seemed interested he might as well start at the beginning.

"I'm sure you've noticed Toothless is missing a tailfin." When Merida

nodded he continued "It's actually my fault he lost it. I shot him down during an attack. A couple days later, after searching everywhere I finally found him, still tied up in the boa." Hiccup paused. "I was supposed to kill him, it was the perfect opportunity. My chance to finally prove to my dad that I was a real Viking, that I was just as _useful_ as everyone else." He paused again and shook his head. "But I couldn't do. I tried to, but I couldn'tâ€¦I _wouldn't_. So I cut him free. Then the roles were reversed. The moment he could he had me pinned down defenseless. I should have died there, he was a dragon, it's what they did. But he spared me, like I did him." He looked at Merida, who had slightly wide eyes. "Eventually we grew to accept each other, and now he's my best friend."

Toothless shifted in his sleep and Hiccup patted him gently.

"But that still doesn't answer mah question."

"I'm getting to that part," he yawned and stretched his arms. "but maybe tomorrow, it's getting late."

"Ye can't juist leave me hanging like that." She said, but he had already settled down for sleep.

~::~~

Hiccup woke first, and when he did he noticed Merida shivering next to the now dead fire. He removed his blanket and walked over to where she was and placed it on her.

He made his way to the entrance, the sun's refrection off the snow was almost blinding. The sky was clear, on Berk if it were far enough away it would have been perfect for flying. But being in unknown territory who knows who could've seen them. Besides it would be nice to walk and stretch their legs for a while.

He gently shook her awake and said it was time to get moving.

~::~~

They walked nearly all day, stopping only for lunch and when the sun started to set. Merida had tried to get him to continue his story as they walked but he refused, and told her to wait until later.

The fire was already lit and was cooking some fish that she had caught. Toothless was probably off somewhere hunting his own food. Hiccup reached to grab one he deemed cooked enough; Merida snatched it before he could.

"Hey!"

"I've waited all day, now finish yer story."

He sighed. "Alright, fine. Can I at least have that back first?" Merida looked at the fish before hesitantly handing it back over.

"Where did I leave off yesterday?" he asked before taking a bite.

"Ye and Toothless learned tae accept each other and became best friends."

"Right." He paused trying to figure where he should pick the story up at. "My dad went on a raid, and while he was gone I was put in dragon training with the others. And of course as anyone would have expected, I wasn't that great at it; at first. I started to learn things about dragons from Toothless. Like there's a certain spot on each dragon that if you scratch it just right they go limp, that they hate eels, and there's a certain type of grass that's like dragon nip."

Toothless came back, clearly satisfied with whatever he had found for himself. He curled himself around Hiccup, much like the night before, placing his tail over his lap. Hiccup scratched the dragon's head, and he purred lightly at the action.

He looked over at Merida and noticed that she was watching them; he also noticed that she was trying not to shiver. The sun had managed to melt away most of the snow and since they were heading south it would get slightly warmer, but not much. Hiccup just wished that they still had the cave and weren't out in the open.

"Pretty cold out here tonight isn't?"

"No, it's nae that bad."

"It's warmer over here. Dragons are like personal heaters."

She glared at him. "I'm fine. Ye should continue telling the story."

"I'm not going to let you freeze."

"I said I was fine."

"But you don't look like it."

"I'm perfectly fine with staying on this side of the fire, even if it means I'm a little cold. Why are ye making this such a big deal?"

"You're the one that's making it a big deal, Merida. It's not like I'm going to do anything."

"But I don't know that." she regretted the words as soon as they left her mouth. She knew he wouldn't, she knew Hiccup wasn't that kind of person; she just had a really bad habit of saying the wrong thing.

There was a silence.

"Do you really not trust me?"

She looked away from him. "If I thought ye were going tae dae anything I wouldn't hae come with ye."

After quietly debating she sighed and got up. Toothless opened an eye as she got closer, he lifted up his tail so she could sit down leaving a good amount of space in between her and Hiccup.

Instantly she was warmer, the chills already falling off her.

"Alright I did what ye asked. Now continue."

So he did.

He went on to tell her about how he used the technics he'd learned in training, and about how Astrid got jealous of him because he was better than her. He told her how one day she followed him when he visited Toothless because she wanted to know how he was suddenly better than her. When she discovered the dragon she ran back to the village to tell the others. Hiccup couldn't stop her in time, so he did the next best thing, he hid Toothless the best he could.

His father returned the next day and was immediately caught up on the gossip. The woods were searched, but the dragon wasn't found. Stoick demanded Hiccup to tell him where the beast was, but he refused. Eventually Gobber managed to calm him down.

"That's when he told me about the marriage proposal." Hiccup avoided Merida's gaze and looked into the fire. "They wrote him off as a defective dragon, since he hadn't killed me. They realized I would do anything to protect him. So it was used in their advantage. Like I said, short version, he's a bribing piece."

"That's why you signed the treaty so easily."

He nodded in reply.

"That's horrible"

He shrugged. "It's not that bad. I mean this," he gestured to the both of them "could have turned out a lot worse."

She supposed he was right, things could have been a lot worse.

~::~~

They were almost there, nearly a day away.

The skies were perfect for flying, for the first part of the day that is. The farther they went the more it seemed the clouds below them got darker and thicker.

Soon they found themselves in the grey mist and could hardly see but a few feet in front of them. Merida heard thunder in the distance.

"Maybe we should land?" She suggested.

Hiccup agreed and told Toothless land somewhere. Hopefully they could find shelter before things got too bad.

That was their mistake.

As they descended they found out that it had been a horrible idea.

Rain pelted down on them and they were soaked in seconds. Hiccup tried to get back above the clouds but the winds were too strong, he had no control, which meant Toothless didn't either.

Lightning struck in front of them causing Toothless to violently jerk to the side, almost throwing Merida off. She held on tighter as the winds continued to toss the around.

"We have to land!" She yelled over the wind.

"Working on it!" Light flashed behind them.

"Hiccup! The tail!"

When he looked back the fake fin had been completely destroyed, rendering it useless, yet Hiccup still tried to move it, desperate for anything to work.

Unfortunately it didn't.

~::~~

When Merida woke she saw a light gray sky encircled by treetops.

She groaned as she sat up, her head felt like it had been hit with a club. She picked some twigs out of her hair as she looked around.

"Hiccup?" she called "Toothless?"

She was alone.

Merida stood up trying to get a better look around as she called them again.

She walked around for a bit before she heard a low animal like groaning. Rushing through the brush she found a large black mass.

"Toothless!" she hurried over to him to make sure he was alright. For the most part it seemed so.

The saddle was still intact, and by some miracle the majority of their things were still there as well, including her bow, but there was just one thing missing.

"Where's Hiccup?"

The dragon picked himself up and looked around, appearing to just realize that his rider wasn't with him. Merida spotted something dangling off the saddle. It was the part of Hiccup's harness that kept him hooked to Toothless.

They searched until sundown and found nothing. Merida hesitantly placed a reassuring hand on Toothless.

"Don't worry we'll find him."

~::~~

He was lost in a foreign land without a map or any idea where he was.

At some point in the storm they had all been thrown off and separated. And now Hiccup was alone, lost and hungry. But most of all he just hoped that Merida and Toothless were okay.

For now he would have to put off searching until the morning.

~::~~

Merida turned the parchment sideways and then upside down, everything looked the same. They were by a river, one of many that could have been on the map.

"Ugh, how are ye supposed tae read these things?" she turned to Toothless. "I don't suppose ye know how tae read this." But he paid her no attention as he was sniffing something on the ground.

"Toothless? What is it?"

~::~~

Hiccup was no tracker, but he knew tracks when he saw them. Only these appeared to be human, and since it rained so hard recently they had to have been pretty fresh. They couldn't have been Merida's, it was too big.

He followed them on the path that was close to the edge of a steep hill for a while; hoping that he would find something or someone that could help him.

When he heard something rustling in the brush beside him Hiccup realized that he had nothing to defend himself with. The sound was getting closer and fast.

"Oof!"

Next thing Hiccup knew something had rammed into him and he was rolling down the hill with it. When he came to a stop there was an almost crushing weight on top of him.

He managed a sigh of relief. "Toothless!"

The dragon moved so Hiccup could sit up and once he did his face was covered in slobber. "Ugh." He grimaced in disgust "It's good to see you too bud."

He stood and glanced around. "Where's Merida?"

The question was soon answered when a stream of curses came stumbling down the hill.

"Ye shouldn't go running off like that beastie! At least warn me or someth- Hiccup."

They ran into each other's arms for a hug, they suddenly realized

what they were doing and quickly separated.

Hiccup coughed awkwardly and rubbed the back of his neck "I'm, uh, glad you're okay."

"Glad you're okay too."

She looked down at her hands and handed the map back to him.

"Thanks," he said. "but I doubt it'll do us much good now. I have absolutely no idea where we are."

Merida walked past him. "No, but I think I might."

"What?"

She touched on of the trees. "We're close."

~::~~

Over an hour later they reached the edge of the woods, they could see the castle through the bushes.

When she didn't instantly run to the building he asked "What's wrong?"

She was quiet for a moment. "What if they don't want tae see me?"

"Of course they will, they're your parents." He said placing a hand on her shoulder.

"Then why did they leave me behind sae easily?"

"Sometimes parents do things that they think is best for their family. Sometimes they're right, and sometimes they're not."

If only it was clear which of those two it was.

~::~~

After they told Toothless to stay behind in the woods, they snuck past the guards and into the castle grounds. It wasn't exactly a good idea to bring a dragon along without explaining themselves first. They went to the stables first

"Angus!"

She rushed over to the creature and wrapped her arms around its neck. Merida looked back at Hiccup who was standing at the edge of the stall.

"Hiccup, this is Angus. Angus, Hiccup."

She motioned for him to come closer. "He's nae goin' tae bite." She turned back to the horse and continued to pet him.

Hiccup yelped behind her and shortly after there was a soft thud. She turned to find him on the ground.

"Oi, ye wee devils, didn't ye promise me ye would behave?"

At the sound of their big sister's voice they tackled her into a hug. "I said you'd see me soon didn't I?" she laughed.

~::~~

Merida decided to wait until dinner to confront her parents.

Right now she could hear them in the dining hall, her father telling a story while her brothers listened.

Normally they were very good at keeping secrets, if you paid the right price. Apparently just having their big sister back was payment enough to keep their mouths shut.

She steadied herself before walking out, asking Hiccup to stay behind in the meantime. She wanted to face them alone first.

The queen saw her first. When she first looked up she blinked a few times, as though she expected her to disappear. Abruptly she stood, nearly knocking her chair over, causing Fergus to pause midsentence.

"Elinor, what is-" he asked as he turned around to see what she was looking at.

"Hi mom, da." She tried weakly.

"What are you doing here?" she asked quietly, not exactly sure what emotion she was feeling. "What have you done?" she asked a little louder.

"I juist wanted tae come back home."

"Merida, you should not have come. Do you have any idea the consequences this could entail?"

"Yes, but-"

"So you knew what would happen, yet you still came here?"

"Mum, please I-"

"No, you have to go back." the queen paused for a moment. "How did you even get here in the first place?"

"I brought her." Hiccup said coming into view. "We're just here for a visit."

"Your father knows about this then?" Elinor asked seeming to calm down a bit.

Merida and Hiccup looked at each other.

"Yes." Merida answered.

~::~~

After a very interesting dinner they all agreed that they would discuss the subject more in the morning.

Merida took her old room, and Hiccup got one close by.

"You lied earlier." Hiccup said standing on the threshold of her room.

"If I hadn't then she would be sending us back right now, if she hadn't already."

He didn't respond, instead he asked "Can I come in?"

Merida simply nodded. He looked around as he entered.

"Well it sure is a lot bigger than the one you have back on Berk. You've got your own fireplace and everything. Now I see why you wanted to leave so bad." He laughed lightly.

Merida sat on her bed. "How long dae ye think we can stay?"

"Well that storm tore up Toothless' tail pretty bad, and that's just from a glance. It'll take me a few days to fix it, provided I have all the right materials I need. But after it's fixed I think it would be best to go back."

"Right, it probably would be." She said softly, pulling her knees up to her chest.

"I know that you would like to stay longer, and if it were up to me I would be more than happy to let you. But it's not."

She didn't appear to be listening anymore, as though she was deep in thought about something. When she didn't respond he took that as his cue to leave.

"Well goodnight."

"I'm sorry." It was almost a whisper. "I'm sorry for treating ye the way I have. I wasn't really thinking." She paused. "I was being selfish. I didn't take into consideration that you're in the same place I am. I took everything out on ye. What ye said before, about us juist being kids, you're right. We are just kids, living in an adult world where they try tae control our lives tae their benefit." She hugged her knees. "And it's nae fair."

"Merida-" Hiccup stared, not really sure what to say.

"Thank ye."

"For what?"

"For doing this, taking me tae see them. For nae treating me the way I treated ye." She looked at him "Why didn't ye? Ye had every right tae."

Hiccup just shrugged. "I guess I'm just not that type of person."

"I'm glad you're different." She said giving him a small smile.

* * *

><p>REVIEW!<p>

End
file.